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COMMUNAL INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES AND THE LEBANESE SYSTEM
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Ph.D. Thesis

Reclaiming the Community Public Sphere: Communal Individuals, Communities and the Lebanese System

Tesis Doctoral

Reclamando la Esfera Publica Comunitaria: Individuos, Comunidades y el Sistema Libanés

Tesi Doctoral

Reclamant l'Esfera Pública Comunitària: Individus, Comunitats i el Sistema Libanés

Massimo Di Ricco

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Doctorate Programme in MEDITERRANEAN CULTURAL STUDIES

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ΒΗΡΥΤΟΣ

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An Abstract of the Thesis:

Reclaiming the Community Public Sphere: Communal Individuals, Communities and the Lebanese System

The Lebanese confessional system, besides the continuous reshapes assisted since its establishment, finds its peculiarity in the institutional recognition of various confessional communities and in its structure based on the idea of the power-sharing. Each recognized Lebanese community enjoys of political quotas in the national Parliament, and the system provides them with prerogatives in managing the personal status law of their own members, making the community autonomous from state interference on such issues. Such prerogatives sanction the Lebanese communities as political entities. This research assumes that first the confessional system, as a consequence of such prerogatives, institutionally sanctions the role of the community as a necessary and fundamental intermediary between the individual and the state. The community, and its informal clusters, represents the structure of the Lebanese system. Therefore, I suggest here the creation of multiple publics, that for the span of this study have they to be identified with the various Lebanese confessional communities, although it is not excluded the presence of other publics that are not strictly related with the communities, but here not taken into consideration. Such multiple communal publics, along with the national public sphere, together shape the general Lebanese public sphere. Lebanese individuals are indeed recognized as citizens through a compulsory communal affiliation, and such condition makes extremely important the role they play within the community sphere.

Due to these reasons the focus is moving here from the analysis of the national sphere to the almost neglected communal one, and specifically to the analysis of the internal dynamics of public sphere within three

chosen communities: Druze, Shiite and Greek-Orthodox. Such communities have been analyzed through various variables extrapolated from the literature on public sphere and the peculiar Lebanese case.

This exploratory thesis aims to show that the the community public sphere is an important sphere which functioning relies almost on the role played by what I called "communal individuals", briefly described as those figures that work, or "have a say", within the community sphere. It is possible to define these individuals as "activist", the term in its widest meaning, of the community sphere. The role of the communal individuals highlights for its importance as actors of the community public sphere, also in consideration of the fact that on many issues the state is left out from mingling within such sphere.

Therefore, the community public sphere remains still neglected and it represents a sphere where critical attitude and autonomy are difficultly shown. Such considerations bring to promote a culture of activism that attempts to extend and develop a community public sphere that still lacks of control and where self-proclaimed authorities can easily appear.

This thesis is grounded on the idea of the importance of the community publics dynamics in order, on one side, to understand the general functioning of the Lebanese public sphere and, on the other side, as a way to understand the role played by the communal individuals in extending and developing it. The active role played by the communal individuals results to be the base for what is possible to define as an "extended citizenship", a form of control of a sphere out of the hands of the state and that makes individuals oscillating between the national and the communal sphere. Such extended feature becomes more and more urgent especially in ages of strong sectarianism, as occurred in the years this study was carried out, when communities developed the tendency to withdraw on themselves and the struggle for the repartition of power staged at national level almost occupied the whole public discourses.

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Resumen de la tesis:

Reclamando la Esfera Publica Comunitaria: Individuos, Comunidades y el Sistema Libanés

El sistema confesional libanés, no obstante los continuos remodelamientos en que incurrió desde su establecimiento, mantiene su mayor peculiaridad en el reconocimiento institucional de varias comunidades confesionales y en su estructura de *power-sharing*. Cada reconocida comunidad libanesa disfruta de unas cuotas políticas en el parlamento nacional, y el sistema les provee prerrogativas en la administración de las leyes de estatuto personal de sus propios miembros, lo que supone la autonomía de la comunidad respecto al Estado sobre estos asuntos. Dichas prerrogativas sancionan las comunidades libaneses como entidades políticas. Este estudio asume que el sistema confesional, como consecuencia de estas prerrogativas, sanciona institucionalmente el rol de la comunidad como intermediario necesario entre el individuo y el estado. La comunidad va a representar la verdadera base del sistema político libanés. Sugiero así en este estudio la creación de múltiples públicos que hay que identificar con las varias comunidades, que de todas formas no excluyen la presencia de otros públicos que aquí no han sido tomados en consideración. Estos múltiples públicos comunitarios, junto con la esfera publica nacional, moldean la general esfera publica libanesa. Los individuos libaneses son de hecho reconocidos como ciudadanos a través de una afiliación obligatoria comunitaria, lo que supone que el rol que ellos juegan dentro de la esfera comunitaria resulte de extrema importancia.

El enfoque de la tesis se mueve desde el análisis de la esfera nacional hacia la casi invisible esfera comunitaria, específicamente a través del análisis de las dinámicas internas de esfera pública entre tres comunidades elegidas: drusa, chiíta y griego ortodoxa. Estas comunidades

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han sido analizadas a través de algunas variables sacadas de la literatura sobre la esfera pública y el específico y peculiar caso libanés. Esta investigación exploratoria pretende demostrar la importancia de la esfera publica comunitaria, y como el funcionamiento de dicha esfera depende en gran parte del rol ejercitado por parte de los "individuos comunitarios", que es posible aquí definir como unas figuras que trabajan dentro de la comunidad o asumen una posición pública sobre los acontecimientos que conciernen la comunidad. Es posible configurar estos individuos como "activistas", en sentido ancho, de la esfera comunitaria. El rol de los individuos comunitarios destaca por su importancia como actores principales de la esfera pública comunitaria, también en consideración del hecho que varios asuntos están fuera del alcance directo del Estado, que se exime de interferencias en la esfera comunitaria.

Sin embargo la esfera pública comunitaria disfruta de muy poca visibilidad y representa una esfera pública donde la actitud crítica y autonomía de visión, difícilmente se hacen visibles. Estas consideraciones llevan a la necesidad de una cultura de activismo que tenga como intento lo de extender una esfera pública comunitaria que todavía sigue fuera de control, negligente y donde autoridades informales pueden fácilmente aparecer.

Esta tesis tiene come base la idea de la importancia de las dinámicas públicas comunitarias, por un lado para entender el funcionamiento de la esfera pública libanesa y, por otro lado, como modo de entender el papel jugado por parte del individuo comunitario en extender y desarrollar la misma. El rol activo jugado por los individuos comunitarios resulta ser la base para lo que es posible definir como una "ciudadanía extensa", una forma de control de una esfera que está fuera del alcance del Estado, y que los pone fluctuando entre la esfera nacional y la comunitaria. Esta función extensa coge más visibilidad en especial modo en tiempos de fuerte sectarismo, como ocurrió en los años en que la investigación tuvo lugar.

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a FPU grant of the Spanish Ministry of Education. Without these supportive grants this research would have not been possible. The framework of this work is in debt with the doctoral programme in Mediterranean Cultural Studies of the Rovira i Virgili University of Tarragona and sponsored by the UNESCO Chair for Mediterranean Intercultural Dialogue, which taught me to undertake my research from different perspectives and helped me taking a multidisciplinary approach. This dissertation is based on data obtained during the fieldwork done between March 2005 and December 2007. The American University of Beirut, the University of Balamand and the Antioch Greek Orthodox Center of Research headed by Professor Suad Slim, and especially their libraries, turned out to be necessary tools in order to fill the gap of the literature on the region and on the considered communities. A warm final thanks to everyone accompanied me in these years and, last but not least, to my unextended family.

Foreword

On 14th of February of 2005 I decided to book the flight for Beirut. While in Tarragona, a provincial town in the Spanish autonomous region of Catalonia, I got the confirmation the same morning for the flight with date 2nd of March. The same day at 2:00 PM I was in hurry filling and completing the draft of my research proposal in order to apply for an affiliation at the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES) at the American University of Beirut, a prominent academic institution in the Middle East. My Greek flatmate Alex and I were sitting in the living room in our house with a gorgeous view on the Mediterranean Sea on the Tarragona bay. I was soon going to leave Spain to have a brief rest in my hometown in Italy, Lugo, near Ravenna, the former capital of the Byzantine Empire, and not far from the Adriatic Sea, a strip of the Mediterranean Sea. While typing and discussing the last lines of the draft of the research proposal that titled "Minority Identities and Civil Society in the Mediterranean Region", the television on in the other room broke the discussion. Breaking news was the killing of Mr. Lebanon, to paraphrase a well-done book on the assassination of Rafik Hariri, former Prime Minister, Sunni Muslim and the great example of a self-made entrepreneur that made a fortune in Saudi Arabia kingdom during the Lebanese civil war. The voice of the journalist from the Catalan television came first, and then images of the crater and the chaos going on in the Beirut *corniche*, the popular seaside stroll of the Lebanese capital. Rafik Hariri's assassination represented the final feature of instability in an already tense situation that Lebanon was experiencing after the almost simultaneous U.N.S.C. Resolution 1559 of November 2004 and the extension of President Emile Lahoud term for three years. The assassination of Rafik Hariri pushed to what the international mainstream media soon labeled as the "Cedar Revolution", the *Intifada al-Istiqlal*, and that defi-

nitely marked Lebanese history for its massive rallies around Downtown Beirut. Such events definitely shaped and influenced the evolution of my doctoral dissertation, and helped me narrowing down the focus on the analysis of the community public sphere.

The first part of my career as a Ph.D. candidate focused on the issue of minority rights within the Mediterranean region. Such interest arose, on one side due to the appealing struggle of minority groups in search for an institutional recognition and, on the other side, due to the failure in the wide recognition of a positive idea of diversity. It was already evident that such issues were related with the major idea of diversity, or of the "Other". The idea of Lebanon had the main goal to get a closer look at the situation in a country that is normally described in European literature as "the country of minorities", "the Switzerland of the Middle East", as "not a country but a message of coexistence". Lebanon originally represented for me just an interesting laboratory to understand such a web of subnational identities and the internal dynamics in a country where none of these communities was a clear majority able to shape the country on its own. Also, from a first glance on the field, it seemed that in Lebanon there was no such a problem as the rights for minorities. Each "minority", due to the unique Lebanese confessional system, is recognized by the state, and each of them is able to manage far from state interference what is possible to define as their own "private" affairs, such as the family law. Additionally, each "minority" benefits from a political quota based on their demographics (according to 1932 census), that grants them with a communal representation in the Parliament.

The perception I had of Lebanon began shaking after the first days of that peculiar historical moment. The concept of minority and the same idea of minority rights changed substantially during my staying in Leba-

non, moving away from the strong emphasis that Western public opinion and scholars normally give to minorities' issue in relation with such region. My interest was instead quietly moving to understand, considering Lebanon as a country that institutionally sanctions diversity on a national level, if inside these communities there was such diversity, with a special emphasis on Lebanese communal individuals, in a system that is giving so much importance to groups.

Since that day of February of 2005, still the struggling in the new reshape of Lebanon is going on. I left Beirut at the end of 2007 with the election of the new President of the Republic. I naively dreamt of closing a circle of history that started with Hariri's assassination but did not happen. Lebanon never reserve you what you expect. What is left is a cocktail of Mediterranean feelings and the surreal moment of my first intimate relation with this country and already a glance of that enchanting town called Beirut.

Note on Citation and Transcription

The English spelling of Arabic words is based on that used in English daily newspapers. Most readers are likely to be more familiar with these than with transliterated forms.

List of Illustrations

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I. Introduction

"I pericoli inerenti all'azione derivano tutti dalla condizione umana della pluralità, che è la condizione sine qua non di quello spazio della presenza umana, che è la sfera pubblica. Ne consegue che il tentativo di eliminare questa pluralità equivale ad abolire la sfera pubblica stessa". (Arendt, 2005 [1958], p. 162)

This study aims to analyze dynamics of public sphere within three Lebanese communities: the Druze, the Shiite and the Greek-Orthodox. Although the main focus and the base of the research concerns such communities, the whole study attempts to shed light on the Lebanese public sphere, the confessional system and the role played by Lebanese individuals within the selected communities. Why the analysis of the community public sphere?

It is assumed here that the Lebanese confessional system is institutionally making of the community a necessary and fundamental intermediary between the individual and the state, and it is sanctioning the communities as political entities. I suggest in this study that such condition represents the peculiarity of the Lebanese case. The community, and its informal clusters, such as extended family, patriarchy and kinship, represents the base of the structure of the Lebanese system.[1] Therefore, I suggest here the creation of multiple publics, that for the span of this study they have to be identified with the various Lebanese confessional communities, although it is not excluded the presence of other publics that are not strictly related with the communities, but they are not taken here into consideration.[2] Lebanese individuals are indeed recognized as citizens through a compulsory communal affiliation and such condition makes extremely important the role they play within the community sphere.

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1 I will try to highlights in chapter three how the Lebanese confessional system is not only encompassing political issues, but it also includes social, cultural and economic issues. The confessional system shapes the life of the Lebanese people, encompassing the whole public sphere with its pervasiveness. For these reasons it is preferable in specific circumstances to adopt the term "Lebanese system" instead of "Lebanese political system".

2 It could have been meaningful to consider the Lebanese diaspora public sphere and its influence on the extension of the Lebanese public sphere. The Lebanese diaspora public sphere has to be considered as being potentially part of the general Lebanese public sphere, but it seems that nowadays the diaspora community lacks in creating such conditions.

The study will focus on the role of what I called the "communal individuals", briefly described as those figures that work, or "have a say", within the community sphere. It is possible to understand these individuals as "activists", intending this term in its wide meaning, of the community sphere. This thesis is grounded on the idea of the importance of the community publics dynamics in order, on one side, to understand the general functioning of the Lebanese public sphere and, on the other side, as a way to understand the role played by the communal individuals in extending and developing it. Considering the role the system is giving to the community, the conclusion of the study will discuss in chapter eight the dynamics of community public sphere within the three elected communities, and then in the conclusive chapter it will open up some questions on the Lebanese system and the role of the individuals within it. At the very base of the thesis is the idea that an inquiry onto the public sphere represents a key to understand the functioning of the Lebanese society and in particular of the Lebanese system.

The Independence Uprising of spring 2005, and the events that followed such historical momentum, represents the basis for such inquiry into the Lebanese public sphere, and an interesting starting point in order to understand the functioning of the Lebanese system, and the meaning of sectarianism.

A. *Intifada al-Istiqlal*: Basis for an Inquiry

Already at the beginning of March of 2005 the events that followed the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri were on the spot of the international mainstream media and George W. Bush was almost everyday spending few words for the "free people of Lebanon, fighting

against terrorism in the name of independence and democracy."[3] CNN was continuously streaming from Beirut Martyrs' Square, and this made Lebanese people proudly feeling, stronger than usually, to be the "belly button of the world". At that time it was possible to taste all around the town simple and natural emotional feelings of change among the population. Autonomous strolls of horning cars, national flags waving on every balcony and conspicuous smiling faces were the ingredients of that emotional moment. The Independence Uprising, *Intifada al-Istiqlal*, which is the real name of the mass-mobilization, already started, but it was necessary to wait until that sunny 14th of March to receive the deserving consecration. Or maybe it is better to say that it was necessary to wait either for the 8th and the 14th of March rallies in order to set up what would finally be the stage of the post-revolution phase. The loyalist gathering of the 8th of March, mostly composed by Hezbollah sympathizers, in order to thanks Syria, represented the catalyst for the following 14th of March "opposition" demonstration.

Under the banner of the Cross and the Koran, the Lebanese youth, through a demagogic discourse of brotherhood, gathered almost daily in Martyrs' Square, sleeping in tents day and night, claiming for the TRUTH on Rafik Hariri's assassination, asking for an international investigation, and pushing constantly for Syrian troops withdrawal from Lebanon, under the cover of U.N.S.C. Resolution 1559. Nationalist feelings were high, and as most of the nationalist movements, they were carrying racist overtones against the Syrians and simultaneously excluding opposite ideas of the nation, labelling them as foreign "enemies". At the end of April, under national and international pressure, the Syrians left the country after twenty-nine years of what the opposition labelled as occupation. Few days

3 At that time the United States President, George W. Bush, was in almost each public appearance spending words of support for that part of the Lebanese population that was demonstrating in order to push Syrian troops out of Lebanon.

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later the former President of the Republic, the "General" Michel Aoun, came back from his exile in Paris and, in July, through the umpteenth amnesty law, "Doctor" Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces and the only warlord convicted after the 1975-1990 war in Lebanon, was released after eleven years of jail. The situation was confusing and people's feelings already split between those of freedom and independence, and that of fear for the return to a not far and obscure past. Syria left the country, the only convicted leader of the bloody civil war was now free, and Michel Aoun was back. It seemed that the dispute could start again from where it had been left in that tragic biennium of 1989-1991, when, at the very end of the civil war, two opposite governments ruled the country. At that time the *Intifada* was declared over. Leaders from the then opposition called for an unquestioned withdrawal from Martyrs' Square.

②

The end of the Independence Uprising made two things quite clear, that would become later particularly helpful in order to give a narrowed focus to the research. First, the near end of the *Intifada* was characterized by the appearance of sectarian, communal-confessional feelings at the very hand of that movement that wanted to unify Lebanon not under the banner of the confessions but through national unity and in the name of the struggle for independence. Confessional merchandising, cult of community leaders and displaying of religious signs were a must in that period, due also to the oncoming parliamentary elections, which the political system established as based on confessional quotas. The Lebanese flags were not waving alone anymore: other more usual flags of communal/confessional parties were waving stronger. The easiest interpretation of these events could be explained by the still strong presence of communitarian feelings and by the interests in achieving a particular communitarian objective, that was not in the agenda of the majority of the people that demonstrated in that spring. Second, it is necessary to take into consideration that the popular uprising ended, at that time, on one side with the withdrawal of the Syrian troops, but on the other side with the release of Samir Geagea and the return of Michel Aoun from exile. The popular and national connotation of the uprising, the real power that made the dream a reality, had already gone missing. Traditional political leaders decided en bloc to declare as concluded the Independence Uprising and they decided to go for elections with the attempt to win the majority of the seats under the emotional wave of the *Intifada*. The main goal, represented by the Syrian withdrawal, had been achieved and none of the political actors wanted to go further. The malaise of Nadine, the main actor of Mai Masri's documentary Beirut's Diaries on the Cedar Revolution, represents a clear example of the feelings of some Lebanese with the decision to dismantle the Freedom Camp.

As a consequence, the whole month of June was characterized by the

first "free" parliamentary elections in the country.[4] It soon represented a clear and weird ending of a popular revolution, where the candidates were not presenting real political programs and convicted warlords were released from jail. Furthermore, it was also difficult to understand how what at that time was called the opposition, and that was leading the *Intifada*, could reach electoral deals and shape alliances with the so-called loyalist camp, that, according to the opposition, they were representing Syrian's interests in Lebanon. The new coalitions were basically shaped by the agreements of the usual historical Lebanese political leaders that were all institutionally cleaned up of their crimes after the civil war through various amnesty laws. The Lebanese population were clearly left out from the electoral process, and with the simple duty of casting their vote in the ballots. At that time the influence of communal, traditional and feudal leaders on what was presented as a spontaneous mobilization started to become an evidence for many people, and disappointment and frustration were already palpable among those Lebanese that put all their hopes in the Cedar Revolution.

B. From Personal Interrogatives to a Double Assumption

After more than two years, a first glance on *Intifada al-Istiqlal* ending and evolution can give a wide spectrum of the Lebanese society. The discriminatory patriarchal structure of the society is still at a very high level, something that was incarnate by the succession of the publicly and politically unknown Saad Hariri to the seat of his father Rafik, instead of Bahia, sister of the former Prime Minister and strongly involved in the mass-mobilization. The patron-client relationships between leaders and

4 Members and sympathizers of the opposition bloc used to define the elections as "free", with reference to the absence of Syrian's troops in the country.

members of communities, and the power of leaders to mobilize masses were displayed in the demonstration of the 8th and of the 14th of March, the two political blocs competing for a different idea of Lebanon. The leaders mobilized masses continuously in the following years. The idea of compromise, as a bad connotation of the idea of consensus, that shapes a system ruled by heterogeneous elites was displayed by the alliances of the following elections. Last but not least, the continuous frustration of the Lebanese people regarding the behaviour of their politicians did not end. Nothing really changed in the structure of the Lebanese society. The power moved from the hands of Syria and its internal allies to the new majority that came out from the electoral rounds, and that were not certainly excluded from previous strong alliances with Syria. The whole Independence Uprising appeared for many Lebanese just as a mere game of power.

The people that gathered in Martyrs' Square, behind the main requests of independence and Truth, looked as if they wanted to turn Lebanon upside down, in order to resolve not only temporarily most of the problems affecting the country, and not with the intention to strictly achieve Syrian withdrawal. So why, when the various leaders took up the self-interest decision to stop the revolution, no critical voice stood up publicly against that choice? It was possible to change the country without changing that political elite class that entirely represents a legacy of the dark ages of the bloody civil war? A voice stood up at the end of April questioning from within, in an uncommon display of self-criticism, the behaviour of the new leading coalition of the 14th of March. Sadly, this voice was silenced at the beginning of June by the first of those unclaimed bombs that would have taken the Lebanese stage in the following years, inaugurating the campaign of political assassinations within the country.[5]

5 "Uprising within the Uprising", Samir Kassir's article appeared on daily Lebanese An-Nahar on April 1st of 2005. See Appendix III. Journalist Samir Kassir has been killed by

So, was *Intifada al-Istiqlal* a confessional revolution or a nationalist one? It is possible to argue that it was a nationalist revolution, and that due to the Lebanese confessional system, it assumed soon a communal content, that was basically started by a Druze bloc and its main leader in cooperation with the Christian opposition to Syrian's rule in Lebanon, and to whom then most of the Sunni, shocked by their leader's assassination, decided to openly join. The "others" were mainly the Shiites, and Hezbollah in particular, and the following national confrontation was going to be grounded on this divide. Considering that these leaders almost all belong to a community of reference, should individuals from these same communities have stood against them? Should have individuals disputed the behaviour of the politicians that were claiming to represent them? Why anyone questioned, in those circumstances of great changes in the country, the community representation that was still the same of the civil war? Why did not emerge any demand for this kind of change? The national public sphere did not succeed in doing so or it was not in the interesting of the Lebanese people?

From a preliminary observation of the Lebanese society it seems clear that the national public sphere is being ruled by various and aged communal leaders, and that the same Lebanese state is mainly composed of a gathering of the same communal leaders. Such condition creates the elements for the weakness of the state. It is necessary to remark that the Lebanese confessional system is essentially based on community political quotas and personal status law. Each community enjoys of a political quota in the Parliament and they manage their own personal status law. Also it is possible to say that in the Lebanese confessional system the

a bomb placed on his car on June 2nd of 2005. The assassination remained unclaimed. Samir Kassir's article has been fully reproduced in the Appendices in order to highlight such a form of self-criticism, which is considered here as a basic pillar of the public sphere. Self-criticism is unfortunately hardly displayed in Lebanon.

community represents a clear and necessary intermediary between the individual and the state. So, is the duty of such "communal individuals" to criticize and stand publicly in front of their own community representatives, or instead just "have a say" within the national sphere? Is representing the community sphere a place where important decisions can be taken and were public sphere can be displayed?

At this point it was possible to advance two assumptions, that will turn to be the main structure of this thesis and that will be helpful along this study in order to reach the aim of implicitly highlight the centrality of the community public sphere in the Lebanese case. The first assumption originates from the consideration that the Lebanese political system places the community as the official intermediary between the individual and the state, and sanctions the Lebanese communities as political entities. In doing so, and through the creation of communal institutions, with a certain authority on the individuals, and the allocation of political quotas for each community, the Lebanese system creates multiple publics that all together shape, with the national sphere, the general Lebanese public sphere. So, it seems necessary to underline the importance of the community public sphere and, even more important, to move the focus of analysis from the national sphere to the almost neglected dynamics of the community public sphere, that constitutes the base of the institutional Lebanese political system. The innovative point of this approach lies on moving, in order to analyze the system and the Lebanese society, from the traditional approaches on the national public sphere to the community public sphere. The second assumption is grounded on the idea that these multiple spheres are institutionally created by the system and it is so necessary to take them into consideration in order to understand the functioning of the system. The community public sphere results an essential tool to understand the general Lebanese public sphere, along with the national public sphere. Therefore, it is assumed that the analysis

of the national public sphere is not enough in order to understand the functioning of the Lebanese system and, as a consequence, it is not possible to neglect such multiple community spheres. As a consequence of this double assumption, it is necessary to make an inquiry onto the role of what we will call the "communal individuals", that is represented by those people acting publicly within the community sphere, besides their national or communal identity self-representation. While on a national level both communities and single individuals can play a role in shaping the public sphere, at the community level the segment of reference is mostly represented by the so-called communal individuals. Therefore, considering the compulsory affiliation to a community in order to exist as a Lebanese, and due to the lack of a civil law that would allow individuals to deal directly with the state on personal status matters, which is the role that such individuals play within the community public sphere? Are they working to expand these multiple community publics, which represent a necessary step to develop the general Lebanese public sphere? Which are the dynamics of the community sphere?

These community spheres need to meet with the general criteria of the public sphere that is possible to draw from the analysis of the peculiar Lebanese case and the literature on the public sphere. In order to approach these multiple communal publics it is necessary to take into consideration several dynamics, that will turn to be the variables of investigation, that characterize the community sphere. The inquiry will be based on the following variables that will be useful in order to analyze fundamental aspects of the community public sphere, and whose importance will be better and deeply underlined in chapter four.

- The concept of freedom
- Critical stance and acceptance of diversity
- The physical space of the communities

- Communal institutions
- Leaders and authorities
- The communitarian/confessional society
- Communal individuals' role

The initial difficulty in applying a specific theoretical framework to the Lebanese case and the inquiry on the community public sphere, pushed to the election of such variables of investigation extrapolated from the Lebanese case and the literature on the public sphere, and that will be spread in the analysis of the three selected communities.

The general objective of the thesis will be the study of the community public sphere in three different Lebanese communities, through the analysis of internal community dynamics and the study of the behaviour of communal individuals and their actions, in order to highlight the importance of the community public sphere. The selected communities will be the Druze, the Shiite and the Greek Orthodox. The selection of these three communities is mainly due to their belonging to the six major Lebanese confessional communities and for other reasons that will be better explained later in this chapter. The dimensions of inquiry will be represented by the Lebanese confessional system, the community public sphere and communal individuals behaviour in dealing with the community public sphere.

The inquiry on the public sphere does not represent a form to introduce and adapt a Western term to a different area, but, considering also its deep and wide application *in loco*, it basically entails the wide concept of freedom, acceptance of diversity and political participation. Although the idea of public sphere is often related to the development of democracy, it appears inadequate to speak directly in terms of democracy in our case study. Although it is a term used, and abused, on a national level by the same community leaders and political actors, it will be reductive to

focalize the analysis of the case in terms of democracy, that could exclude other important issues, such as individual freedom within the community sphere, that deem key to understand the internal dynamics of the communities. Therefore, this study will not represent an inquiry on the level of democracy within the Lebanese communities or of the Lebanese system.

This study doesn't aim to propose the best political system for Lebanon, but it aims to shed light on a sphere that seems almost publicly neglected, and to offer an idea, through a internal communal perspective, of the reality of the Lebanese condition. In the conclusion, with the aim of opening possible new questions for future researches, I will suggest some guidelines to improve the functionality of the Lebanese "precarious" system. This thesis modestly attempts to fill the gap in studies concerning the Lebanese political system in relation with the public sphere within the Lebanese communities. The study of the community public sphere has been almost neglected in Lebanese and international literature. It is instead assumed here that the community public sphere could be intended as a site of dissent as well as the national sphere. It is indeed assumed that the Lebanese political system implicitly requires, due to its peculiar shape, the community sphere as a place of civil activism. According to such condition, the community public sphere can play an important role in shaping the general Lebanese public sphere.

Summarizing, three main interrogatives will move this thesis toward a better comprehension of the community public sphere in Lebanon: what is the role of communal individuals within the community public sphere? Which are the dynamics within the community spheres of the chosen communities? Is the functioning of the community public sphere affecting the whole Lebanese system?

C. A Multidisciplinary Theoretical Approach

The Mediterranean region is what we can define as a non-institutional region. Diversity is a common reality of life in that Mediterranean region that lies on a sea that has historically been a way to unite the different sides and to divide different institutional areas. This thesis will be approached from a perspective of a non-institutionalized region that shares common culture and habits, but that has also its strength in the inner diversity of the people living here. I firmly believe that, in the case I am going to analyze in the next pages, it is important to take a multidisciplinary approach. Furthermore, I am aware that the work could be accused of being not exhaustive and not grounded in one discipline. I will probably understand the possible critics that could be directed to this work, but I am convinced that the study, and the topic of my dissertation, will at the end, through a multidisciplinary approach and an exploratory character, better shed light on different characters of Lebanon and leaving many questions unanswered, however lying the groundwork for future researches. As underlined by Habermas in the introduction of his first edition of the "Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere", the complexity of the subject that will be taken into consideration, forbids considering it only from one discipline perspective and advices instead to face the inquiry through a multidisciplinary approach. It is also important to set, on a certain level, the inquiry in the historical framework of Lebanon in the years of the study.

As one of the main objectives of the thesis will be to draw from the Lebanese case the useful variables for the inquiry, in order to apply them to the analysis of the communities, the theoretical approach will be discussed in depth in the following chapters. The theoretical structure of this thesis is grounded on the same progressive evolution of the model of investigation along the first four chapters, and it is based on the strict

relation between general theories, the Lebanese case and the variables that will be extrapolated and applied to the analysis of the selected communities. Here we will briefly delineate the main literature that was taken into consideration for the study. While a lot of works have been done on the analysis of the Lebanese communities (Khuri, 2004; Shanahan, 2005; Azzam, 2007; Deeb, 2006; Norton, 1987; Hanf, 1993) it was difficult to find studies that directly addressed the issue of the community in relation with the public sphere, especially in socio-political terms. Beside the discussion of the major literature on the concept of public sphere, this thesis will address other related issues. First of all the different interpretations of the Lebanese system, from a political, social and institutional point of view, that will then be discussed in depth in the third chapter. The public sphere will be discussed in the fourth chapter, in order to draw the criteria and the variables that should be applied to the analysis of the community sphere. It would also be done a brief review of the literature on minority rights useful in order to formulate empirical questions and to open interrogatives on the Lebanese political system that would then taken up in the conclusion.

1. The Lebanese System

The intricate Lebanese political system gave scholars the opportunity to consider it under different perspectives. Certain authors analyzed the system through the idea of a power sharing political system based on the relation between different communities, and so based on a multi-communal approach (Hanf, 1993). On the same vein, but strictly related to dynamics of consensus that characterize what have been defined as a consociational democracy, Lijphart excludes dynamics of majority and minority within the Lebanese political spectrum (Lijphart, 2001). Messarra adopted too the theory of the consociation of communities and un-

derlined the important role of the elites that are ruling the Lebanese communities and the state (Messarra, 2003). Other authors preferred to avoid considering Lebanon just under the light of what is called a confessional system, but more specifically looking at the social cleavages between the population and the different patterns of modernity (Corm, 2005). The issue of modernity was deeply confronted by scholars dealing with the Lebanese system in two opposite and controversial ways. Makdisi for example explained the birth of what he calls sectarianism, another interpretation of the system that we will debate in chapter three, as a peculiar form of modernity born due to the encounter between European powers and the Ottoman Empire reforms in nineteenth century Mount Lebanon (Makdisi, 2000). Another vein of modernity was mostly predominant in the sixties with the studies of the Lebanese republic in terms of modernization, or lack of democratization (Binder, 1966; Hudson, 1968). Also there are those authors that prefer to investigate Lebanon underlining its communities differences and the weakness of the state (Picard, 2002), or that understand confessionalism as a contract between different communities (Beydoun, 1984). The issue of community feeling and as a consequence a dynamic of "retribalization" with the creation of strongholds, particularly during ages of internal crisis, was mainly underlined by Khalaf (Khalaf, 2002). Many of the authors previously mentioned dealt with the central topic in Lebanon of the constant influence of foreign actors in the country politics and its contributions on Lebanon continuous instability. Some of them especially focused their analysis and explanations of Lebanon's weakness on this idea (Tueni, 2004 [1985]). Finally it is noteworthy to keep in mind the approach to Lebanon from a citizenship perspective and on the role of the individual within the political system (Salam, 1998). This last approach directly allows us to raise some questions on the system and the role of the individual, especially in the community public sphere, as it directly concerns the main aim of this study.

From the literature analyzed, what was not thoroughly considered is an analysis of the political institutional system and at the same time of the informal institutions and social practices of the Lebanese society, considered as a consequence of the permeating political system. In order to better understand the real functioning of the system, it seems necessary to analyze such issue in depth. Some questions that will be discussed in chapter three need to be raised. Is the confessional system that causes Lebanon instability? Is Lebanon a multi-communal state or just a political system that favour the predominance of leaders and religious figures? Is it necessary to link the political system to inveterate social practices?

2. The Public Sphere

The Lebanese system, institutionalizing the community as the official intermediary between the individual and the state, is implicitly creating multiple clusters of public spheres in terms of political and social action that individuals need to take into consideration. The relation between public and community has not been deeply studied, especially in terms of socio-political action, and the objective of this study is also to modestly try to fill this gap. The concept of public sphere had been deeply debated and has always brought about not few controversial issues. The Lebanese case in addition, recognizing the communal identity as an essential tool to access the state, is in first instance creating blurring boundaries between "normally" accepted concepts of private and public. In the literature on public sphere, the most remarkable issue is probably the one concerning the separation of the public and private sphere (Habermas, 2005 [1962]; Arendt, 2005 [1958]). Other authors, especially those with a particular feminist approach, criticized this separation, preferring an idea of public and private that is grounded on a continue renegotiation of the boundaries, in order to reach a more flexible concept (Benhabib,

1992; Fraser, 1992).

Our case, concerning the dynamics of the community public sphere in Lebanon, opens up another intricate issue that many scholars have addressed: the idea of community in its relation with the concept of public. While for some authors the community represents a term strictly related to the idea of consensus, responsibilities and sharing norms (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004, p. 18), others emphasize the different realms of public and community, where the former is suggesting a certain openness and the latter instead seems more deeply related to the concept of homogeneity (Fraser, 1992, p. 127). The ambivalence of the duality community/public, has been considered also on the divide that the public is the place for voice rather than of loyalty (Eisenstadt, 2002, p. 140). In consideration of the case we are going to analyze, that is grounded on an institutional recognition of the community sphere, it is important to underline the issue that concerns internal differences. Iris Marion Young provides helpful tools to approach this topic. Considering the danger of homogeneity that the idea of community is carrying, especially if minorities, and besides promoting a positive idea of community, Young argues in favour of the essential promotion and recognition of individual differences within the groups (Young, 1990, pp. 226-236). The Lebanese confessional system, considering that the community is the intermediary between the individual and the state, and taking into consideration the role of the allocation of political quotas, is then also implicitly creating a series of multiple publics. The presence of multiple publics, and the preference for this multiplicity instead of a single public, are analyzed in general terms by both Calhoun and Fraser (Calhoun, 1992, p. 37; Fraser, 1992, p. 123). Fraser specially shapes in her work the definition of "subaltern counter-publics" that will have a mutual control function between these various clusters (Fraser, 1992, pp. 123-124). This brief literature review will be further elaborated in chapter four. As a conclusion, let me

call the attention to two issues that will be fundamental in order to extrapolate the variables of inquiry. The first one concerns the associations, endowments and institutions related to the community, which Eickelman, in his study on Muslim majority societies, considers as an intricate web that shapes the public sphere (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004, p. 14). The second issue concerns the public space, considered as the realm where the public can be physically displayed (Arendt, 1963, p. 120), and Lebanon presents a very prolific literature on this topic, that is mostly related with reference to architectural reconstruction and post war reconciliation (Huybrechts and Douahyi, 1999; Les Cahiers du CERMOC no. 8, 1994). Other issues that will shape the idea of public sphere will be raised in chapter four, in order to draw from the Lebanese case the useful variables in order to analyze the community public sphere.

3. Minorities, Communities, Individuals and Rights

This study started with a specific approach on minority rights, but soon faced the difficulty in applying the same term minority to the Lebanese confessional communities, moving thus away from this strict approach. For these reasons the objective of such literature review serves on one side to identify possible internal dynamics of the Lebanese communities and, on the other side, to consider the idea of minority as group and open then in the conclusion possible future ways in order to apply theories of minority rights to the Lebanese case.

The minorities' issue in the Middle East is strictly related to matters of terminology, and it has been always represented as a controversial issue for the authors studying the region. Many authors tried to reach a definition of the term and a workable definition, beside the consideration that even on an international level a clear definition meets with a lot of difficulties and controversies (Capotorti, 1991). One of the first authors that tried to

give a rigid classification of minorities in the Middle East and in the Arab region is Albert Hourani with the notable book "Minorities in the Arab world" (Hourani, 1947). Many authors followed Hourani's approach and classification, especially grounded on the consideration of a Sunni Arab majority (Ma'oz & Sheffer, 2002). The ground for the classification of groups residing in the Arab world was chosen in relation to a majority, implicitly underlying the necessary presence of a majority in order to define a minority, and, second, on the geographical context of the study (Bengio & Ben-Dor, 1997). Such issue is already questioning the possible application of the term minority to the Lebanese case. The literature on conflicts produced by ethnic divergences represents also a scholar mainstream, generally abusing of the term ethnic associated to indigenous and minority groups (Ma'oz & Sheffer, 2002; Hanf, 1993). Concerning terminology and our case study, Khuri, implicitly proposed a classification of groups in the Arab region, involving consequently also Lebanon and its communities, basically under the terms religious minorities, sects and religious movements (Khuri, 2006 [1990]). Various authors are particularly critic with this wrong application of the term ethnic and minority, and especially with their application without really questioning the terminology (Corm, 1999). The federalist option and the problems minorities are commonly facing in the Arab world in term of identity recognition and second-class citizenship, had been raised especially by Ibrahim (Ibrahim, 1996).

In the case of Lebanon, it seems not possible to define a simple and clear majority. On one side it is a consequence of the lack of an updated institutional census, the last of which dates to 1932. Demographic data on the ethnical or religious composition of a country always represents a very sensitive issue in the whole Arab world, but especially in a power-sharing system such as Lebanon. The census of 1932 shaped the confessional repartition of power within the country and any official change in the census would cause a great reshape of the role of the various communities

within the political system, probably provoking a wave of claims from the communities that in the last eighty years increased their demographics. On the other side the three major communities amount each to 20-30% of the total population, not permitting them to be considered as a majority. The better term that is possible to apply to our study seems that of community, of confession or of confessional community, due to the strict translation of the Arabic term *taifa*. The possible translation of the term *taifa* with the English word sect, and as a consequence the employment of the term "sectarianism" to define the Lebanese political system, will be better addressed in chapter three. Although, as a preliminary approach, I consider that the term sectarianism implies more than a simple definition of a political system, but a practice specifically related to a peculiar time and when communitarian feelings increase to the point that the dynamics between the communities assume violent forms. To conclude the discussion on this issue it is necessary to mention the work of the master of Arab sociology, Ibn Khaldun, and the concept of '*asabiyya* he developed (Ibn Khaldun, 1989). The objective of this study is on one side to open up interrogations on the application of the term minority, and on the other side to shed light on such terminology with the aim of make some comparisons with studies concerning minority rights. Indeed, it is possible to understand the Lebanese confessional system as a form of providing minorities or groups with rights, and it requires that we look at seminal works on minority rights, even if in a different context (Kymlicka, 1999; Van Dyke, 1995). This approach will be useful just in order to open some empirical questions on the internal dynamics of these groups and consider the possible consequences on the general functioning of the system (Kukhatas, 1995; Green, 1995).

D. Druze, Shiites and The Greek Orthodox: Reasons for a Selection

Confessionalism is at the base of the Lebanese system and consists basically of the recognition of all the religious communities residing in the country. Confessionalism provides these communities with political quota and autonomy in relation to the personal status of their individual members.

Based on these first considerations, it is important to consider this ambit for choosing three communities in Lebanon on which to conduct this research. The Druze, Greek Orthodox and Shiite communities were chosen as case study for this research. It is worth noting that these three communities together cover almost half the seats in the Lebanese Parliament, and they are close to fifty percent of the entire population (Cobban, 1985; Khuri, 2006 [1990]; Picard, 2002).[6] This research focuses on these large communities in order to highlight the general functioning of the system. It is not indeed the intention of this research to offer a universal rule that could be applied to all the confessional communities in Lebanon. Due to the relevance of these communities in the entire society, either on a political or on a demographic level, the study can shed light on the dynamics within Lebanese communities. Furthermore, it can open up new spaces for reflection and future interrogations on the form of the state and the importance of the community as a fundamental intermediary between the individual and the state (Salam, 1998). The analysis of the community sphere can also shed light on the consequences of the so broadly called minority rights, and the possible side effects on the individual. The three communities were chosen for the following three rea-

6 The national Parliament is composed of 128 seats. The Druze, Greek Orthodox and Shiite occupy respectively eight, fourteen and twenty-seven seats, for a total of forty-nine, that is almost half of the entire seats. In recent statistics, these communities are respectively estimated as around 5-7%, 8-10% and 25-30% of the entire population of Lebanon. This makes their sum around 40-45% of the Lebanese population.

sons: religious affiliation, minority position and geographic background.

1. Religious Affiliation

The first reason for the selection of the three communities, Druze, Greek Orthodox and Shiite, is religious affiliation. It is useful first, to consider the term "religion" to mean the institutional duality between Christians and Muslims, rather than in the actual definition of the term. This can be explained by the fact that Judaism is not considered a religion, but rather as confession, represented in Parliament in the Christian minorities seat. The system, after the rearrangements resulting from the Taef Agreement of 1989, is based on an equal division of the 128 seats of the Parliament between Christian and Muslim communities. While Sunni, Shiite, Druze and Alawite communities make up the Muslim population, Christians are divided into fourteen communities, most of them representing a very small percentage of the entire population. Based on this reasoning, the selection of the communities will be limited to Muslims and Christians. In order to do so and encompass the different religions, the Shiite community was chosen to represent the Muslim communities and the Greek Orthodox were chosen to represent the Christians communities. The third community, Druze, represents a functional exception to the duality of religion in Lebanon. Although the institutional political sharing system places the Druze among the Muslim communities, it is important to consider it as a separate entity. First of all, the Druze faith, historically a sect of the Shiite branch, can not be assimilated, in terms of religious conduct, as a quite simple Islamic sect, due to its syncretism and its different religious practices (Makarem, 1974). On the other hand, given the political and social self-identity of Druze members in Lebanon, one cannot assume they completely belong to the Muslim religion. For these reasons, it is important to consider the Druze community as a group that will bet-

ter fit in an autonomous position, between Christians and Muslims, not following the institutional division of Lebanon into two religions. This consideration will avoid a strict and simplistic divide between Muslims and Christians. The selection of these three communities can give a wide spectrum of the different forms of religion present in Lebanon and their influence on the community public sphere. At this point the question could arise as to why other communities were not considered, such as the Sunni, the Alawite, the Maronite, the Greek Catholic or the Armenian communities. The second motivation that subdues the selection will help in answering this question.

2. Minority Position

The second reason highlights the minority aspect or feeling that the three chosen communities present, with some particular considerations on the role they played in shaping the confessional system. For the purpose of this research, the concept of minority is related to the idea of power, demographics and representation.

The three communities involved in this study hold institutionally a minority position within the system. Although they represent a significant part of the country, they do not hold very influential positions. The Druze, for example, around 5-7% of the population do not have any important position in the power-sharing system of the country; they are excluded from the three most important political offices; they are still waiting for the establishment of a Senate, that will provide them with the seat of president, as was established in the Lebanese National Constitution (Maila, 1992). The Greek Orthodox community, although representing about 8-10% of the general population, does not hold any important influential office, although its members are customarily appointed to some of the most influential minister offices; also they do not play a fun-

damental role in the system and the forms of communal expression are often encompassed by the general claims of the Christian community. As an example, the 2005 wave of assassinations in the country, that mostly targeted Greek Orthodox personalities, did not provoke a clear stand of this community.[7] It is possible to consider the Shiite community as holding institutionally a minority position, though its high demographics number, that amounts around 25-30% of the entire population and that makes it the biggest Lebanese community. The position of Speaker of the Parliament they control seems to some extent less influential than that of President of the Republic, or that of Prime Minister, either on a political level, or as an institutional representative position, especially for international protocols. The importance of this office consists essentially in the possibility to delay the discussion in the Chamber of draft laws prepared by the Council of Ministers. Such condition necessarily causes forms of bargaining between the Speaker and the Council, but this prerogative does not actually provide the community with such a powerful position respect the other two offices mentioned before. Shiite community was also historically marginalized and unrepresented, especially before the outbreak of the 1975 civil war, and, like Druze and Greek Orthodox, they were not completely involved in the arrangements of the Taef Agreement (Corm, 2005 [2003]).

Lebanon is organized as a consensual system, without a clear majority in the traditional sense of the word. None of the Lebanese communities can reach alone, in demographic and political terms, a position of majority respect to the other communities. The three most powerful and influential offices, as the confessional system ratifies, are the one of President of the Republic, that of Prime Minister and that of Speaker of

7 Samir Kassir, George Hawi and Gebran Tueni all belong to the Greek Orthodox community. Elias Murr, that has been also victim of an assassination attempt, is also belonging to the *Rum* community.

the Parliament. The President must be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of Parliament a Shiite. This implies different levels of complementarity between the three highest positions in the state, excluding the possibility for anyone of them to act without the consensus of at least one of the other two (Messarra, 1994; Rabbath, 1986). The current system functions with no clear-cut distinction between majority and minority either in the society or in the Parliament. On one hand, communities and parties are obliged, in order to form a government, to strength transversal alliances that transcend the religious institutional divisions between Muslims and Christians. On the other hand, as was highlighted by the last 2005 elections, the majority coalition usually attempts to form a Cabinet of Government allowing members of the oppositions to take part in it. Notwithstanding, it is clear that institutionally, and potentially, Christian Maronites and Sunni Muslims appear to be in a better position of power, due to the political offices they hold within the state, and due to the allocation of seats in relation to demographics. These two communities were also the main actors in the last rearrangement of the country system, represented by the Taef Agreements of 1989. Consequence of Taef Agreements, Christians assisted to a decreasing of their power, either in the role of the President of the Republic, either in the quota system. The President of the Republic office dispensed part of his power to the Prime Minister, the Council of Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament. The quota system changed from the equivalence of 6:5 in favour of Christians, to one establishing an equation of 5:5 between Christians and Muslims (Maila, 1992). Although the 1990 agreements lowered the general political power of Christians, the Maronite community maintained in the quota system a dominant position with 35 seats on 128, respect to the 27 seats allocated to both Sunni and Shiite, the other two most prominent communities. Concerning Sunnis, Taef granted them with a more powerful position, in

the figure of the Prime Minister and the 27 seats allocated to them by the quota system, although in demographical terms it probably represents the third community of the country, behind Shiite and Maronite. The last census in Lebanon took place in 1932, during the French Mandate, and highlighted a Christian majority of the population. Nowadays many scholars presume that the religious composition of the country changed, and that certainly on a demographic level the Maronite community is not anymore predominant, came through especially by the Shiite (Cobban, 1985; Picard, 2002). As result, the issue of minority should be seen more from a political-institutional perspectives, the ones underlined above, associated to demographic considerations.

It is necessary to analyze this issue in relation to the role the community played in shaping the Lebanese confessional system. The Druze community historically represented a conspicuous component of Mount Lebanon's population and society, while Greek Orthodox were framed in the urban Beirut capital, and Shiites were later included in Greater Lebanon, although a small part of them were also located in Mount Lebanon. Concerning the *millet* system, that shaped the structure of the Ottoman Empire, the considered communities benefited from different forms of representation. The Druze community along with the Maronite constituted a quite autonomous region and government in Mount Lebanon; the Greek Orthodox were officially recognized in the Ottoman system that provided them with their own *millet*; the Shiite were instead excluded from enjoying of their own identity and rather were included with the Sunni Muslims. The Shiite community reached the first forms of autonomous identity recognition only with the reforms inside the Ottoman Empire and the process of state building. Although in different ways, these three communities were since the beginning included in the new system and they contributed to shape it. Despite this contribution, all of them were excluded from the major bargain around the idea of the

nation. The creation of Great Lebanon in 1920 was grounded on the Mandate deals with Maronite and Sunni, just as the unwritten National Pact of 1943 was basically a deal between Maronite and Sunni. As we underlined above, the Taef Agreement also represented an exclusion from the negotiations of these communities.

The minority aspect was chosen in order to study the community public sphere. Dynamics within such less powerful groups can better highlight some aspects of the communities. A perception of the community that is closed to the idea of solidarity and sharing norms, especially in the Lebanese system, can carry to a lack of individual freedom within the community and to forms of authoritarianism difficult to hold accountable. First of all it is possible to find within minority communities, more than in powerful groups, a less vibrant community public sphere, due to the idea that opposing views can endanger the existence of the entire community. Second, fear of being crashed by other communities, due to the above reasons, can lead to narrow forms of collective bargaining on the common good within the community. These forms can lead to a lack of space for individual autonomy from political confessional parties or kinship within the community, and an absence of critical stance and dissention, that we should consider as fundamental aspects of the public sphere. As one of the final aims of the study is the analysis of the importance of the community as a necessary intermediary between the individual and the state, we should take this into consideration. Third, assumed the importance that minorities can undertake in a national system in terms of critical behaviour and development of the public sphere, it is important to ascertain that this same logic works within the community, especially in the dynamics among their members. Finally, the consideration of the minority aspect, especially concerning internal dynamics, can open the space for comparisons with studies on minority rights' theories, either if set in other context and with different societal

and political structure.

3. Geographical Background

Scholar Fuad I. Khuri classified religious groups in the region, into sects, religious minorities and religious movements (Khuri, 2006 [1990]). The three considered communities fit into the first two categories as follows: the Druze and Shiite communities are represented as sects, while Greek Orthodox as a religious minority, ascertaining that religious movement are absent from the Lebanese scene in institutional terms. Khuri especially underlines the incorporative character of religious minorities in relation to state institutions, and the segregating character of the sects. Meanwhile sects present a more homogeneous territorial concentration and congregate in peripheral regions, religious minorities appear more dispersed and mainly concentrated in an urban environment. Even if it is not the aim of this research to take a position concerning groups' classification in the region, but to focus more on the general concept of community, it is important to underline two major characteristics that emerge from this classification, and that should be taken into consideration. The relation between the different geographical backgrounds and the dynamics within the community, and the historical distinct relationship with the state that these type of groups present, depending on their own classification. These considerations are functional in order to justify the selection of the three communities.

On the one hand, it is generally accepted that the Greek Orthodox community comes from an urban background, although many are currently concentrated in a rural environment, such as the area around Koura, in Northern Lebanon. The historical role of community members as merchants place many of them in an urban environment, especially around the capital Beirut (Davie, 1994; LCPS, 1996). On the other hand,

Druze and Shiite communities, originally come from a rural background, mainly the mountains of Mount Lebanon and the South of Lebanon. This environment can display the dynamics existing between landlords and peasants (Salibi, 1989; Khuri, 2002; Chevallier, 1971; Gilsenan, 1996). Today it is also important to perceive the Shiite community in what can be labelled as a "modern" environment, the suburbs agglomerates of the capital Beirut (Deeb, 2006). This last consideration on the Shiite community, highlights three different types of background for the selected communities, that also encompass the different environments that can be detected in the country: rural, urban and suburban. These environments present varying forms of social relation among members of the communities and between members and leaders of the communities, and can shed light on the dynamics of the internal public sphere and the forms of representation, especially on a political level.

E. Methodological Approach

The thesis, that is based on the analysis of three Lebanese communities, the Druze, the Shiite and the Greek-Orthodox, will be basically grounded on a qualitative approach and it will be exploratory in character. This study is exploratory in the way that considered as impossible to completely cover the analysis of the selected community public spheres and of its actors. What has been analyzed along this thesis will be helpful to highlight the centrality of the community public sphere and the role of communal individuals in extending it. The chosen communities and their actors will be analyzed through the literature on the community and a series of semi-structured interviews. These interviews, that have been performed either with communal actors or national actors and that will be defined as communal individuals, took place in Lebanon between

May 2005 and November 2007. This study is based on more than forty interviews with a meaningful spectrum of communal individuals, such as religious figures, communal leaders, social communal actors, local authorities, political communal figures or individuals working within the community.

The national Lebanese press has also been considered in order to understand what of the community dynamics found a place on the national public. In certain cases the national press has been an important tool in order to understand which kind of community issues had a place on the national public sphere.

The research took different steps and moved on in order to find the elements of the idea of public sphere that was drawn from the Lebanese case. Particularly, it has been first analyzed the communitarian society, that is basically represented by that web of organizations working within the communities. During the preparation of the first part of this doctoral research, and concerning the Druze communitarian society, I interviewied also those Druze that were not strictly working for the community, but on a national level, in order to understand what they were doing on a communal level and which attitude they had toward the dynamics within their community. This approach permitted me to deeply evolve later the idea of communal individuals, and to consider these individuals behaviour as a key factor in shaping the Lebanese public sphere. Then the focus moved to the internal dynamics of the elected communities with the main attempt to discover issues of public discussion, and then to the role of communal authorities and communal individuals within the community.

Functional to the thesis and the research was the fact of living in Lebanon. Three years in a country are not a considerable time, but can helps providing with an idea on how the society is working. I consider this side of the research as an essential part of the thesis.

It is necessary here to underline two factors that on a different level have not been taken into consideration in this thesis. First, the study has not taken into consideration in depth what are called as the "ordinary"[8] population, and which some authors defined as the "plebeian public sphere" (Habermas, 2005 [1962]). While feelings and thoughts of "ordinary" people were taking into consideration mainly through informal conversation, it is impossible to hide the fact that the persons interviewed had a privileged role within the community. In order to study the community public sphere and the dynamics within the three chosen communities, it would have been important to reside where the community mostly expose their dynamics, in the villages far from the city, and to have a real participative observation. Surely it would have revealed dynamics and patterns of public sphere that in other circumstances would have been difficult to detect. But I am also conscious that this approach could have presupposed a different development of the thesis, and in addition I am specially aware of the difficulty in get the confidence of people from three different communities in such a short time. The other obstacle was the limitation imposed by the language, which did not permit me to participate actively in what can be called as the village community. The problem with the language is strictly related to the second unconsidered issue: the incomplete coverage of the national media. Newspapers and televisions are important tools in order to understand the visibility of certain issues and the dynamics of public sphere. At the same time it is necessary to recognize that the Lebanese media system is evidently extremely fragmented in their belonging to a specific political party, family or a defined community. Furthermore, it is possible to suggest that an

8 Many of the individuals interviewed for this thesis, that mostly displayed a self-perception of "well-educated" persons, used to label the "masses" of the communities as the "ordinary" people. They probably identify these ordinary people due to their invisibility and in terms of class.

in depth study of the national media would have not helped in finding that tools that are the base of the community public sphere, and that are characterized by internal community discussion or dissention. It resulted instead useful to get a glimpse of the events and actors that are active in the community sphere and that appears on a national level. This is the case of the Lebanese press in foreign languages, which was analyzed specifically in the last three years, and the case of some articles from Arab or international newspapers that had national echo. I took into consideration what during the research was appearing on the national press, in order to then consider it as a public expression and, at the same time, a way to identify who were the possible individuals that was necessary to approach for an interview.

It is possible to make a general classification of the persons that have been interviewed during the fieldwork: members of communal or national organizations, communal or traditional leaders, individuals mingling into the community sphere, religious figures belonging to the chosen communities and public national figures. Concerning the election of public national figures not strictly related to the three considered communities, the interviews were done in order to shed light on certain issues that have been considered important to understand the Lebanese political system, such as the electoral law and the role played by the so-called national civil society.

F. The Outline of the Thesis

The thesis will be divided up into nine chapters. After this introductive chapter, it has been analyzed the historical framework that covered the time when the research was done. Most of the information recollected on the community public sphere, and in order to collocate the thesis

in defined space and time, should be analyzed considering the peculiar moment has been living Lebanon in the aftermath of Rafik Hariri's assassination. Chapter two then depicts the increasing public feeling of the so-called sectarianism during the period of the fieldwork. Considering that the thesis concerns the study of the community public sphere, it is necessary to take into consideration the strict relation between these general, but not unique, feelings and the study. I will then dedicate the third chapter to the analysis of the Lebanese system. I purposely keep broad the term system, because I aim to highlight how such broad notion of system that rules Lebanon, confessional by denomination, is permeating many aspects of the society and is structuring it. On a specific level, the system is touching either the political either the social life of the population, and it is grounded on institutional and informal practices. In this chapter there will be an analysis of the Lebanese political and social institutions (quota system, personal status law, patriarchalism, electoral law, administrative law...) that will be useful in order to display the general frame where the individuals, the communities and the state interact one another.

After these three explicative chapters, it will be possible, putting in relation the analysis of the Lebanese system and society with the main literature on the public sphere, to propose some specific variables that will then be used in the following chapters concerning the three selected communities.

The following three chapters will take into consideration respectively the Druze, the Shiite and the Greek-Orthodox communities. I will propose a brief historical analysis of the three communities, either from a sociological either from a religious perspective, and then each of these communities will be considered through different prospects, but always with an eye kept on the variables that were previously extrapolated. The approach to the three communities through different perspectives will be useful in order to emphasize the role of the communal individuals within

the communities, and to open up general question on the Lebanese system in the conclusion of this thesis.

These three chapters will then leave the space for a sort of double conclusion that will be spread along chapter eight and nine. In chapter eight I plan to examine the findings coming out from the analysis of these three different communities and draw then an idea of the dynamics of the Lebanese community public sphere following the variables previously extrapolated.Finally I will sum up the entire thesis with the attempt to suggest answers to the preliminary questions, to summarize the characteristics of the Lebanese community sphere, to locate the communal individuals within the Lebanese system and to shed light and open interrogatives on certain factors that could be open future fields of research on the Lebanese entity. Also I will briefly try to advice on possible remedies to, on one side, the persistent instability of the confessional system, and, on the other side, the individuals condition, that are often victims of a self misunderstanding of their place or of their role in such communitarian system.

G. Life and Research in Lebanon

Three years, one war, eight political assassinations, more than twenty bombs in Beirut area, curfew, inter-sectarian clashes, a three months fight between the national Army and a group allegedly affiliated to Al-Qaeda... This is just a reduced panorama of the situation in Lebanon in the years that followed Rafik Hariri's assassination. It does not serve the interest to show the author glorious and heroic life in Lebanon, but to underline the difficulty in terms of stability and the consequences in carrying out the necessary fieldwork. Even if Lebanese people look publicly used to live in such circumstances, but they are instead privately frustrated, it is

necessary to underline the reality of a country that found often itself with empty streets, universities closed and people with high suspiciousness on a foreign researcher coming to investigate internal dynamics of communities. At the same time I cannot deny that the peculiar time that the research has been carried out, from a professional and less from a human perspective, has been extremely interesting for studies concerning communities. Beside these hitches, once the ice was broken, the fieldwork run very fast. This is just an assumption that serves to show and underline how the Lebanese-village and the informal networks between people can permit to reach many people with a person of reference behind. For sure I had to create my own *wasta*[9] in order to achieve most of the interviews, a consideration that highlights social dynamics within the cedars' country.

9 It is possible to translate the Lebanese commonly used term *wasta* with "connection". *Wasta* represents an extremely useful tool in Lebanese daily life in order to resolve problems, reach important persons and getting a job. *Wasta* is defintely an essential intermediary of the Lebanese public sphere, but that also characterizes social dynamics in the whole Mediterranean region.

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II. From Confessionalism to the "Ages of Sectarianism"


③

"Enough violence, Enough provocation, Enough crisis, Enough armament, Enough division, Enough insecurity, Enough corrupt deals, Enough fighting over power. Enough belittling citizens' mind, Enough Sectarianism, Enough Foreign Loyalties, Enough constitutional breaches, Enough! Khalass!" (Khalass association - press statement. October 20, 2007).

"I was insisting that we had a vocation to write the first pages of history but she interrupted me. "No, Robert, you're wrong," she said. "Our job is to monitor the centres of power" (Fisk, 2006, p. xxiii).

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This chapter aims to set the research that was done in these years into an historical framework. It is necessary to consider such historical framework for two fundamental reasons. First, the research has been conducted in the peculiar time window that followed Rafik Hariri's assassination on February 14th of 2005 until the Presidential election planned for November 2007 never held, in concomitance with the end of Lahoud extended term, on November 24th. From an historical perspective, the events occurred in these years strongly brake with the quite common course of history of the previous years and creating a new political situation within the country, especially as a consequence of the Syrian troops withdrawal in April 2005. The research is done in a specific context, on one side in order not to fall in a simple generalization, and on the other side in order to consider it as a useful tool to compare other historical periods. The second reason concerns the fact that the research focuses mainly on the dynamics of the community public sphere. As I will try to highlight, such historical period has been characterized by an increase of communitarian feelings, often labeled as sectarianism, following the trend that characterized the post-civil war era, but that peaked in this period. The importance of the historical framework lies in the increase in communitarian feelings and this could have consequences on the dynamics within the community sphere, the study of which is the main objective of this thesis.

This chapter aims to present the events occurred in Lebanon in the historical framework the research has been carried on, and in order to emphasize specific events that could be fundamental in order to understand the Lebanese public sphere. For the same reason, and as a consequence of the evolution of the events, it is impossible to consider this historical context as over. The planned election of a new President of the Republic in November 2007 could have closed the circle of events started with Hariri's assassination. The presidential election faced instead various obstacles that finally postponed its resolution. Such postponement

highlights the importance of such historical phase as one of these cyclic moments in Lebanon when the reshaping of the political system, and the repartition of power, are at stake. The struggle within the country between two main political blocs, and as a consequence the country's stability, was far from being reached at the time this research has been completed. This chapter will basically try to display the events occurred from 2005 until December 2007 and, through the analysis of which, it will attempt to draw some considerations on this historical period, that will finally bring to label such period as the "ages of sectarianism."[10] Sectarianism, more than a simple reference to empowered sectarian/communitarian feelings, ultimately represents the struggle for power between the Lebanese political class and the ousting of Lebanese individuals from country's affairs and, as a consequence, the loss of an institutional and civil perspective.

A. Foreword (1990 - February 2005)

Lebanon came out from the civil war confirming its peculiar confessional system. Furthermore, it reconsidered the basis of the power-sharing system through a new "National Pact" that was signed in the Saudi Arabian town of Taef in 1989. The Taef Agreement basically reshaped the balance of power between the major Lebanese confessional communities and sanctioned "the fraternal relations binding Syria to Lebanon."[11] The new political pact aimed to reconsider the confessional quotas and the balance of power between the three most important institutional offices,

10 For a better analysis of the implementation of the term "sectarianism" see chapter III.
11 On the Taef Agreement, signed in the Saudi town on November 22nd of 1989 see: Maila, J. (1992). *The Document of national understanding : a commentary*. Oxford : Centre for Lebanese Studies. For the full text see http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/cahier/proche-orient/region-liban-taef-en,. Accessed February 12, 2008.

establishing in this way what is commonly called as the "II République". Syria played a prominent role in shaping such agreement, along with the support of Saudi Arabia, and confirmed its role as arbiter within the country, sanctioned by the presence of troops and a capillary security apparatus. Rafik Hariri, a one-man business coming from the Southern town of Sidon, that during the civil war accumulated a fortune in Saudi Arabia at the court of Prince Fahad, became soon one of the main actors of the Second Lebanese Republic. Hariri embodied the ancient spirit of the Phoenicians and he has been exemplifying it through an aggressive political economy of *neo-libanisme* (Corm, 2005 [2003]), on the footsteps of the Neo-Phoenicians that in the sixties made of Lebanon one of the most attractive places in the region.[12]

The period that followed the cessation of the long internal civil strife has been characterized by a slow process of reconstruction and at the same time by a slow process of rapprochement among the different Lebanese communities. A special emphasis has been put on the task of facilitating an easier spatial connection between the different areas of the country that has been deeply divided by the war on confessional lines.

Furthermore, Israel continued to occupy Lebanese territory until 2000, especially through the help of the friendly, and mostly Christian, SLA (South Lebanon Army). At the same time it has been occasionally raiding the whole Lebanon, in order to retaliate to the attacks perpetrated by Lebanese resistance to the occupation, mainly composed by Hezbollah members, the only Lebanese militia that has been allowed to keep their arms after the ratification of the Taef agreement. On the internal political level, the Christian community came out from the war in a worse condition of power compared to the one preceding the war. On one side the institutional power of the Christian community, represented by the Presi-

12 On the reconstruction of Beirut and the policy of *neo-libanisme* see: Young, M. (1998). Two Faces of Janus: Post-War Lebanon and its Reconstruction. *Middle East Report*. No. 209, pp. 4-7 + 44.

dency of the Republic, decreased in favor of those of the Sunni and the Shiite representatives, respectively the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament. On the other side, Christian traditional leaders emerged from the civil war as in an innocuous condition. Amine Gemayel, former President of the Republic, remained in exile until 2000, and Michel Aoun, also former President of the Republic and Army commander, escaped Lebanon in 1991 and he found refuge in Paris. Samir Geagea, leader of the Christian Lebanese Forces militia, has been convicted in jail with an accuse of assassination in 1994, becoming the only Lebanese former militia leader that has been arrested, and finally Elie Hobeika, another powerful Christian militia leader, has been killed by a car bomb few days before he was going to testify in Brussels on the Sabra and Shatila camp massacre of 1982, perpetuated by the hands of Lebanese Christian militias with the support, or the tacit consensus, of Israeli army officers, at the moment controlling the area around the camp. As a consequence of such internal condition, most of the Christian leaders and masses boycotted the election during all this period and young Christian militants have been normally repressed by the internal security forces when they were staging public demonstrations, mostly characterized for strong anti-Syrian connotations.

The beginning of a new phase started in the period of 1998-2000 and in the following years. In these two years former Army General Emile Lahoud has been elected President of the Republic, provoking soon a competition between the Presidency and the Prime Ministry, at that time held by Rafik Hariri. In 2000, Israeli's troops withdrew from South Lebanon, but Hezbollah, claiming an incomplete withdrawal of Israel from the Lebanese soil, with reference to the area of the Shebaa Farms, continued, with Syrian support, its fight against Israel, launching occasional raid on the border and in the contended area.[13] Hezbollah represented the only

13 On the issue of the Shebaa Farms see: International Crisis Group- Middle East Brief-

militia that at the end of the war has been allowed to keep their arms in order to "resist" the Israeli occupation. In exchange, Hezbollah compromised not to be involved in national politics and in participating actively in the Cabinet, but it just run for seats in municipal and legislative elections. The "Lebanonization" of Hezbollah, and the issue concerning its arms and its full participation in Lebanese politics, will be a highlight of the period we are going to analyze.[14]

Meanwhile, the Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir started claiming too for a withdrawal of the Syrian troops deployed in Lebanon. The Christian community began to publicly display its discontent also through the formation of the Qornet Shehwan Gathering, a congregation of Christian representatives with a strong anti-Syrian connotation.[15] In addition, the main Druze representative, Walid Jumblatt, found himself in strong disagreement with President Emile Lahoud, gradually increasing the deterioration of Druze community's relation with Damascus.

But it is in the second part of 2004, with the extension of Emile Lahoud's Presidential mandate for three years, that has been possible to watch a serious break between the Syrians and various Lebanese political factions. On September 3rd 2004, the Parliament, through an amendment of the Constitution, approved the extension of Lahoud mandate. The day before, on September 2nd, the United Nations Security Coun-

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ing, Hizbollah: rebel without a cause?, Amman/Brussels, 30 July 2003; Ghantous M., *Les hameaux de Chebaa et le droit international public*, Edition Mokhtarat, Liban, 2001 ; King-Irani L., Commemorating Lebanon's war amid continued crisis, in *Middle East Report Online*, 14 April 2005.

14 On the concept of "Lebanonization" of Hezbollah see: Alagha, J. E. (2006). The shifts in Hizbullah's ideology: religious ideology, political ideology and political program. ISIM dissertations, ISIM/ Leiden, Amsterdam University Press.

15 The open letter written by daily An-Nahar editor Gebran Tueni is meaningful of the atmosphere in the country. See: Tueni (2000, March 23) Open Letter to Bashar Assad. *An-Nahar*. It is possible to find the full text in English at http://www.meib.org/articles/0004_doc1.htm, accessed February 12, 2008.

cil approved the Resolution 1559.[16] Many analysts and many Lebanese factions debated in the following months on the direct involvement in drafting the resolution of the same Rafik Hariri, due to the good relations he had with internationals heads of state and due to his personal antipathy toward President Emile Lahoud. Analysts and political opponents claimed too the contribution of exiled General Aoun in resolution 1559, considering its participation in 2003 at the discussion on the Syria Accountability Act, then approved by the U.S. Chamber, that was going to take measures against Syria and finally aiming at lowering the power of Damascus in Lebanon. Such implementations by the U.S. Administration have been following the 9/11 attacks and the new American focus on reshaping the Middle East, following the invasion of Iraq and the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime.

In October 2004, Rafik Hariri resigned from the Government but he did not openly join the opposition, leaded by Walid Jumblatt, and mainly composed of Christian figures. The Bristol Gathering, that represented the new platform of the opposition, released a declaration on December 14th 2004, in which has been numerated its specific aims and objectives.[17]

Syrian occupation of the country implied the presence of a strong security apparatus that affected the daily life of most of the Lebanese people, especially in publicly displaying their opinions. Daring to speak in public about Syria or about the occupation forces represented for many

16 For the full English text of the Resolution see: http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions04.html

17 See: http://www.lebanonwire.com/prominent/political_parties/bristol_gathering.asp. Declaration and membeship of Lebanon Opposition 'Bristol Gathering'. Accessed February 12, 2008. On the other side, the "loyalist" forces formed a bloc named the "Ain El Tineh gathering", established on February 8, 2005. See declaration and membership at http://www.lebanonwire.com/prominent/political_parties/ain_el_tineh_ghathering.asp. Accessed February 12, 2008.

Lebanese a taboo that has been difficult to break until that moment, in consideration of the capillary web of *moukhabarat*, security agents, on the Lebanese soil.

B. *Intifada al-Istiqlal*: From Revolution to Compromise (February 2005 - July 2005)

At 12:55 p.m. of February 14th a tremendous explosion invested a convoy of armored black vehicles while passing on the main Beirut stroll, the *Corniche*, in front of Saint George Hotel. In few minutes the Lebanese, and the whole world, understood that the convoy hit has been that of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The death of Mr. Lebanon arrived the day of S.Valentine, and the reaction of the Lebanese has been emotional.[18] The *shebeeb* of the Mustaqbal movement, the political party founded by Hariri and mostly composed of Lebanese Sunni, raided the town to impose people to respect the mourning. The crowd that gathered around the site of the assassination started soon to accuse Syria for the assassination, and meanwhile the pacific demonstrators were loudly screaming "Syria Out", on the other side it began a bloody hunt for Syrians, directed especially toward occasional migrant workers.[19] Deep emotional feelings invested the town, and Hariri's funeral represented the first step to show the disappointment of the population toward Syrian's rule in Lebanon, and the occasion to stage the "revolution" in the public space:

18 For a well-done account of the moment that preceed and followed the assassination see: Blanford, N. (2006). *Killing Mr Lebanon. The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and its Impact on the Middle East*. London-New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers.

19 At the end of *Intifada* many reports will confirm that the number of Syrian workers assassinated will be more than thirty. On the issue see the Amnesty International report: http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE18/004/2005; Sfeir, T. (2005, March 14). Syrian shopkeeper fatally stabbed. Violence against workers on the rise. *The Daily Star*.

Martyrs' Square, Downtown Beirut, Solidere area, own property of the *shahid*, martyr, Hariri, and where his mausoleum has been built just close to the new huge mosque that would symbolize Sunni power in Beirut central district. Daily demonstration under the name of "The Truth", *'Al-Haqiqà*, on the assassination started to be assembled. After few days a stable camp of tents has been built around the statue of Martyrs' Square, mostly by young people and by affiliated of those parties that wanted Syria out of Lebanon.[20]

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Intifada al-Istiqlal, the Independence Uprising that has been staged in spring 2005, appeared soon as more than a simple demonstration against the Syrian. It represented the discontent provoked by years of occupation and a platform for the demonstrators to ask for freedom, independence, and sovereignty. Strolls of cars, posh girls, military-clothes children, and

20 Raad, N. (2005, February, 19). Opposition demands 'Intifada for Independence'. Feud with government escalates as protesters continue to take to the streets. *The Daily Star*; Ghazal, R. (2005, February 23). Students begin sit-in at Hariri tomb. *The Daily Star*.

beautiful expensive cars were only a face of the demonstrations carried on between February and April 2005. The idea of being part of what was globally labeled as a "revolution", made it attractive for many Lebanese to join the demonstrations. The first Monday after the assassination, as it will become usual, an enormous crowd gathered on Martyrs' Square and Prime Minister Rachid Karame had to resign from his office. But the key line to understand the events occurred in Lebanon in 2005, and that will shape the political confrontation of the following years, came from the rally organized on March 8, basically promoted by Hezbollah to thanks Syria for the help in the previous years, even if implicitly accepting their definitive withdrawal. As each action presumes a reaction, and it's most true for the Lebanese political dispute, the opposition answered to the half-million loyalists with a one million gathering on March 14th. It was just another of those usual Monday of demonstrations, but the presence of that multitude marked it a special day in the history of Lebanon. The opposition signed a great victory, convincing the world that Syria had to leave the country. It was just matters of weeks: on April 26th the Syrians

officially left the country.[21]

The country was at that time shining of the red and white of the Lebanese flags waving everywhere. Smiling faces were omnipresent and this made the days pleasant for a huge part of the population. But soon the situation became alarming again. From March 19th to May 6th, five bombs exploded in the Beirut area, targeting mainly Christian areas, with the specific aim to terrorize and set instability in the country. The bombs did not provoke many dead, and mostly non-Lebanese, and they were by purpose placed mainly near shopping centers and detonated in the night. At the same time, political parties' affiliated started soon to take a predominant stance in the Freedom Camp that has been installed in Martyrs' Square, mainly leading the protest, and leaving out civil components of the contestants. Samir Kassir, prominent Lebanese intellectual and one of the founders of the *Intifada al-Istiqlal* ringed the alarm bell in an article entitled *Intifada bil Intifada* that appeared at the beginning of April on the Lebanese daily An-Nahar.[22] In the following days, at the end of April, and after Syrian withdrawal, the camp has been dismantled and many of the youths that participated in that historical event felt disappointed by such political decision. The Freedom Camp stayed up only with the Lebanese Forces' youth until that day of July when its leader, Samir Geagea, enjoyed of the umpteenth amnesty law, and he was released from jail. At the same time, at the very end of the *Intifada*, confessional merchandising

21 For an account of such period of time see: Blanford, N. (2005, March 23). Lebanon Catches its Breath, *Meriponline*.

22 Kassir, S. (2005, April 1). An-Nahar. See Appendix III. For an analysis of the Independence Uprising, its evolution and its main actors, see: Gahre, C. (2007). Staging the Lebanese nation: urban public space and political mobilization in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination. Thesis (M.A.)--American University of Beirut, Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies; Chemaly, R. La communauté nationale libanaise à l'épreuve du Printemps 2005: Entre le mythe et la réalité. Mémoire de Maîtrise en Sciences administratives et politiques. 2006 à l'Université Saint Joseph (Beyrouth).

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portraying leaders or parties of the opposition was taking the foot of the demonstrations.

⑥


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On June 2nd, Samir Kassir was the first target of a series of selected assassinations that will take the life also of former secretary general of the Lebanese Communist Party George Hawi on late June. The funeral of Samir Kassir, also one of the founders of the *Yasser Democrati*, the Democratic Left, displayed the absence of the masses that were fighting for Lebanese Independence few weeks earlier. Previously, on Saturday 7th of May, "Général" Michel Aoun came back from his exile in Paris and he started to prepare himself and its movement, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), for the oncoming elections that would have taken place in four different sessions starting May 29. The elections displayed a new phase of the conflict for power in the country. The opposition split in two sides. The followers of Michel Aoun run for various seats side by side with political figures traditionally loyal to the Syrian hegemony in Lebanon, meanwhile Hariri and Jumblatt formed electoral lists with Hezbollah and Amal, the two main Shiite parties. The four-party alliance represented a hard blow to the people that thought that time of compromise was

over.[23] The Lebanese consensual formula was still working, and on June 30th Fouad Siniora, former Minister of Economy in the previous Hariri's governments, has been designed Prime Minister and he shaped the new Council of Ministers in less than twenty days.

The new Cabinet has been composed of representatives of the former opposition, now the majority in Parliament, with the Shiite representation completely covered by Hezbollah and Amal representatives with five ministers. The Cabinet underlined the absence of the Free Patriotic Movement of Michel Aoun, that won most of the Christian seats in the previous elections, and specifically in significant Christian areas. Also it was the first time in Lebanese history that Hezbollah has been taking part directly in the Council. Two important factors that later would have represented factors of discussion and instability within the Lebanese political arena.

C. The International Waltz (August 2005 - December 2005)

In the following months, the focus started moving from the internal to the international field. The new repartition of power, embodied by Siniora's Cabinet, stabilized the country, and the main Lebanese political actors began moving for external support. They followed the lines of the worldwide split between the Western countries and the Syrian-Iranian alliance. Lebanon fit perfectly in the divide, and the battle was going to be played on such field of world polarization. The most important issue that was going to be faced was the complete implementation of U.N.S.C. Resolution 1559, with a special and unique focus on Hezbollah's disarmament.

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23 Abdelnour, Z. (2005). Petit Crimes entre amis... *Le printemps inachevé. L'Orient – Express Automne 2005 publié pour les 10 ans de*, 104-107. On the electoral round see also : Jaber, A. (2005, June 18). Lebanon's Sects As They Re-Invent Themselves. Al-Hayat; Noureddine, S. and King-Irani L. (2005, May 31). Elections Pose Lebanon's Old Questions Anew. *Meriponline*.

The International waltz started already in August through the visits by Lebanese leaders to the respective partners abroad, in New York, Paris, Rome, Damascus or Teheran. Syria, after the worldwide shame for the public defeat caused by the off-hand withdrawal from Lebanon, started to walk head-high too. In July, in a show of power, Syrian's authorities decided to close its borders with Lebanon, and then, they attacked directly the new Lebanese government through various speeches. On November 10th, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad delivered a tough speech accusing the forces of the new Lebanese government and called for a street demonstration against them to be staged in Beirut. On November 12th Hezbollah and Amal ministers made a first walk out from the Cabinet, in order to avoid participating in a declaration of support for Premier Fouad Siniora, victim of al-Assad accusations.

But one of the prominent actor of this period on the Lebanese scene has been the German prosecutor Detlev Mehlis, that the previous May has been assigned by the United Nations Secretary General to form an International Independent Investigation Commission in order to investigate Hariri's assassination. From his headquarter in the Metn region around Beirut, Mehlis moved between Syria and Lebanon to interview the persons allegedly involved in the assassination. For almost two months he was in everybody's chatting in Beirut, splitting the population in who was considering him a hero, and who was labeling him as a puppet in American's hands. On October 20th he released his first report to United Nation General Secretary Kofi Annan. By "mistake" two versions of the report has been released: one with the names whitened and the other, that soon became public, with a series of name allegedly involved in the assassination.[24] Few days later, Terjé Roed-Larsen, special envoy of the

24 Dick, M. (2005). The Mehlis Report and Lebanon's Trouble Next Door. *Meriponline*, November 18; Choucair, W. (2005, December 10). Interview with Judge Detlev Mehlis. *Alhayat*; Interview with U.N chief investigator, Detlev Mehlis. (2005, Decem-

U.N. General Secretary in Lebanon, submitted another critical report on the implementation of Resolution 1559, implicitly putting pressure on the issue of Hezbollah's disarmament. The reports provoked internal consequences in terms of stability, and they increased the amounting of international pressure. The reports have been followed by the adoption of the U.N.S.C. Resolution 1636, that was pushing Damascus to fully collaborate with the Commission in charge of the investigation.[25]

Meanwhile, in such international waltz, Michel Aoun, the excellent excluded from the Cabinet, started to blame the majority of an attempt of hegemony and he started shaping a political relation with Hezbollah, the other actor that has been since the formation of Siniora's Cabinet under intense pressure.

December 12th marked a day of changes in Lebanon, and it represented the bell to definitely turn to an open internal confrontation. On one side, Gebran Tueni, one of the strongest voices during the Independence Uprising and editor in chief of the daily An-Nahar, has been victim of a car-bomb that hit his convoy while coming down from the road that connect Broummana to Beirut. It was the first attack after the assassination's attempt of May Chidiac, the journalist of LBC television that survived the explosion of its car on September 25th. Tueni arrived at the Beirut airport the day before its assassination, after a voluntary exile in Paris due to the tense political situation and murder's threats. The perfect opportunism and the information on Tueni movements made many Lebanese thinks that the killers were well rooted in Lebanese society. As would

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ber 23). *Asharq Al-Awsat*; International Crisis Group (2005). Lebanon: Managing the Gathering Storm. *Crisis Group Middle East Report*, N°48, 5 December 2005.

25 See the full text of U.N. Resolution 1636 at http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=s/res/1636(2005). For a critical point of view on the strong activism displayed by the United Nations in those years on Lebanon, see: Corm, G. (2005). *Le Liban contemporain. Histoire et société*. Paris : Editions La Découverte. (Original work published 2003), pp. 305-308.

become usual after these assassinations, the government majority pointed the finger to Syrian's intelligence in Beirut. The same afternoon, after the Cabinet sat to extend the investigation on Hariri assassination to the other assassinations, the five Shiite ministers resigned from the Cabinet, with the purpose to delegitimate the government of Fouad Siniora, that was so failing in the representation of all the prominent communities in the Cabinet.[26] The following day, on December 13th, the second report of Mehlis commission had to be released.


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As each public commemoration in Lebanon, the absence of Lebanese flags at the funeral of Gebran Tueni, replaced with parties emblems, easily demonstrated the current feelings of the country, that was at that time

26 The Lebanese Constitution sanctions the presence of the all the main communities in the Cabinet. A related story to these events is represented by the fatwa emitted by Sheikh Afif Naboulsi, forbidding that the Shiite community be represented by anyone other than Amal or Hezbollah members. On such issue see chapter VI and Appendices VI and VII.

fully mingled in an internal struggle that started to take the semblances of a sectarian conflict.[27] At the same time it exemplified that the memory of March 14th was still alive and that political assassinations would have not stop the agenda of the new government

D. Sectarian Tension and National Dialogue (January 2006 - July 2006)

The new year started with a vehement discussion on Hezbollah's disarmament, specifically through various declarations of Druze's leader Walid Jumblatt. Furthermore, another event made its first appearance into Lebanese politics: the presence of an allegedly Al Qaeda group operating from the Lebanese territory. Such presence was testified on one side by the launch of various rockets from Lebanon to Israel, that was then claimed by the same Al Qaeda representative in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and on the other side by the rumors on the installation of a Sunni radical group in Northern Lebanon. A resurgence of sectarianism was in the air, and as Blanford underlined, "the traditional Christian-Muslim faultline in Lebanon was being superseded by an inter-Muslim struggle between the Shiites and Sunnis, reflecting the broader cleavages rending the Middle East" (Blanford, 2006). No doubt the situation in Iraq was affecting the imaginary of Shiites in Lebanon who where antagonizing the mostly Sunni governmental policies.

The beginning of January was characterized also by the replacement of Detlev Mehlis with the Belgian judge Serge Brammertz, that assumed soon a softer profile and that would have much carefully calibrated his

27 The beginning of a sectarian conflict, due especially to the isolation of the Shiite community has been underlined by Young, M. (2005, December 22). Syria has no intention of giving up Lebanon. *The Daily Star*.

accusation in the following months.

February represented a month full of events for the internal struggle and it denoted a radical change in the position of the main actors. While on February 2nd the five Shiite ministers that resigned in December went back to the Cabinet, few days later, on February 6th, Michel Aoun and Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Shiite Hezbollah, met in the Church of Mar Mikhayel in the suburbs of Beirut to sign a historical "Memorandum of Understanding."[28] The unexpected move marked the beginning of the country polarization and an internal struggle between two political blocs. As a consequence the denomination of the two political blocs changed in the press from that of pro-Syrians and anti-Syrians blocs to that of 14th of March and 8th of March, even if the Free Patriotic Movement of Michel Aoun had been one of the main actors of the Independence Uprising of the previous year.

Just one day before, on the wave of the international protests of the Muslim communities against the publication by a Danish newspaper of some blasphemous drawings the prophet, Muslims radicals, mostly Sunnis, staged a huge demonstration in Beirut and they burned the Danish embassy in Tabaris, in the heart of the Christian area of Beirut Ashrafiyye. In the aftermath of the rally, the demonstrators randomly attacked people, shops and churches in the area, destroying many facilities, mostly belonging to Lebanese Christians. In the evening the Christians demonstrated in the area and a Sunni delegation from the Mustaqbal party, with white roses in their hands, joined the demonstration in order to display its support for the Christians. The Christian Muslim faultline was still alive, resurging so the idea of an impossible coexistence between the two

28 For the full text in English see: http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2006/02/full_english_te.php. Accessed on February 12, 2008. See also: Shirian, D. (2006, February 11). Mar Mikhael Agreement - A New Taef. *Al-Hayat*.

religions that mainly shapes Lebanon's uniqueness.[29]

February 14th also saw the first commemoration of Hariri's assassination. Among the rumors of staging a demonstration that would have reached Baabda's Presidential Palace in order to put President Emile Lahoud under siege, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese gathered in Martyrs' Square. The main leaders, Hariri, Geagea and Jumblatt, for the first time publicly together, did not miss the occasion to vehemently attack Syria influence in Lebanon and its allies within the country. The rally, under the new banner of "Freedom 06", that was going to replace "Independence 05", gathered again the spirit of the Beirut Spring, even if defections, such as Aoun followers, represented a *fait accompli*.

The following months, until the outbreak of the July war, would be characterized by a political national stalemate, exemplified by the seven meetings of the conference for the National Dialogue, that gathered the main leaders of the different communities and parties in order to resolve the main issues of confrontation. The focus was on the creation of an international tribunal to judge on Hariri's assassination, the implementation of U.N.S.C. Resolution 1559 and the election of a new President of the Republic that has been institutionally planned in November of 2007, date of the end of Lahoud's mandate.

While the population started living abstraction for the political stalemate and the game played by their leaders, two events catalyzed the attention. The first was represented by the rally organized on May 8th by the opposition against the social reforms of the government. In the surreal frame of Downtown Beirut, besieged by an enormous deployment of soldiers, tanks and fences protecting Martyrs' Square space, for the first time the followers of Aoun met with that of Hezbollah and Amal, exemplifying the rule of the street as a form of institutionalization of a

29 On the events occurred on February 5th see: Iskandar, A. (2006, February 9). Ashrafiee: Strife in the Security Pits. *Al-Hayat*.

political pact.

On the other side on June 1st, the streaming on LBC television of a satirical program portraying Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah in a funny way, provoked the reaction of the *banlieu* Shiite. Hezbollah followers stormed the area of Ashrafiyye on their *mobilette*, with reported clashes with Christian's militants, until *sayeed* Hassan Nasrallah through a radio speech "ordered" the Shiite youth to go back home.[30]

The following days the football world cup started and *pax olimpica* predominated in town. Clashes between different teams supporters have been reported, especially in sensitive confessional areas, taking the connotation of sectarian strives.[31]

E. The July War (July 2006 – September 2006)

On July 12th the war found Lebanese population unprepared, still drunk from the euphoric celebrations of the summer world cup. Out of the blue, Lebanon found itself in the middle of a war that none expected. The government of Fouad Siniora, as the majority of Lebanese, found itself in the same condition. Hezbollah did not consult the government before undertaking the "Operation Truthful Promise", killing eight Israeli soldiers, kidnapping two and provoking the ill-omened reaction of Israel's army. As Hezbollah perpetrated the attack, Israeli reaction has been strongly directed against the Party of God and its feuds in Southern Lebanon and Beirut Southern suburbs. Israel's retaliation did not save the

30 See the sketch on LBC program Bas Mat Watan at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUClAd3-Z1A. Accessed February 12, 2008.

31 Michael Young's article exemplifies the increase in sectarian tensions within the country in the previous months and its influence on media interpretation of the events. See: Young, M. (2006, May 4). Three sectarian negations cannot make a nation. *The Daily Star*.

country's infrastructures from the hellhole, and of the more one thousand victims at the end of the conflict, some of them were soldiers of the Lebanese army that passively stood in front of the invasion and the bombings. Israeli's answer to Hezbollah's operation took a very sectarian shape, hitting basically Shiite towns in the South and the party's headquarter in Beirut area of *al-Dahiya*.[32] In the woeful scenario that presented the South of Lebanon after the war, some of the Christian villages close to the border remained untouched.

On the other side the Lebanese population showed a unique feeling of fraternity, forgetting sectarian differences and cleavages. Many refugees from South Lebanon, mostly Shiites, were hosted either in school in Christian Ashrafiyye area, either in the dominant Druze area of the Chouf. The war made Lebanese brothers again, and the common enemy represented their strength.

The 33-days war ended with the implementation of a seven-point plan proposed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and when Western countries, especially the United States and the U.K., decided to give consent to stop Israel's retaliation on Lebanese soil. Israel's vehement answer, officially in order to get back the two kidnapped soldiers, aimed at definitely destroying Hezbollah's guerrilla and infrastructures. The second objective was clearly, behind bombing infrastructures all around Lebanon, that of provoking an internal reaction against Hezbollah. None of these objectives have been finally reached during the war. Furthermore, Israel's attack aimed to provoke a sectarian reaction within the Lebanese territory, and attempted to weaken the whole Lebanese entity, destroying its infrastructures and some of its main factories.

The U.N.S.C. Resolution 1701 adopted on July 11th set the frame of the cease-fire, and it planned the deployment of 15.000 UNIFIL soldiers

32 On the sectarian shape of the war see: Quilty, J. (2006). Israel's War Against Lebanon's Shi'a. *Meriponline*, July 25.

at the border with Israel, on the Lebanese side, in order to oppose the illegal traffic of arms or any armed presence.[33] The increase in the 30-years old UNIFIL troops was going side by side with the deployment for the first time since thirty years of 15.000 Lebanese soldiers, as was planned in Siniora's seven-points plan. Hezbollah declared the "divine victory" and soon all the streets toward *al janoub*, the South, has been filled with billboards celebrating the gesture of the resistance and the evilness of the American-Israeli's partnership. Such occupation of the public space would have later provoked a similar reaction by the bloc of the 14th of March at the end of the year.


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In the aftermath of the war a strong exchange of accuses made soon its appearance. One side was accusing Hezbollah of carrying Lebanon into a war they did not ask for, and the other side was clearly claiming

33 See the text of U.N.S.C. Resolution 1701 at http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=s/res/1701(2006).

complicity between Siniora's government and Israel in order to definitely eradicate Hezbollah from Lebanon. Meanwhile, in September, UNIFIL forces started deploying in the South, and two rallies, staged at the end of the month, marked the frame of the new internal dispute: Hezbollah's disarmament. Hezbollah celebrated the divine victory in *al-Dahiya* on September 22nd, defying Israel with the personal appearance of *sayeed* Hassan Nasrallah on the stage. The day after, Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces, warmed up its followers in the Christian town of Harissa, asking for a solution for the problem of the arms in the hands of Hezbollah. Two places and two gatherings recollected two radical representatives of two Lebanese communities: Shiite and Christian. This was the situation at the end of September 2006.

F. Bipolarism, Street Threats and Constitutional Debate (October 2006 – December 2006)

Harb tamouz, the summer war, left Lebanon in a deep crisis and a strong internal polarization between the two main blocs. Reciprocal exchange of accuses have been slammed everyday, and the main plan of the opposition was now toppling Siniora government, also considering the possibility to recur to street's protests in order to reach the goal.

The debate focused on the formation of a national unity government and on the possibility for the opposition to enjoy of a minority of blockage, to obstruct policies considered hostile to the opposition, like Hezbollah's disarmament, or to contrast the politicization of the international tribunal assembled to judge Hariri's assassination.[34] The debate,

34 La formation chiite répond au communiqué des forces du 14 Mars. Le Hezbollah invite la majorité à ne plus soulever le problème du désarmement. (2006, September 11). *L'Orient - Le Jour*.

in a strange exercise of war amnesia, went back to the July war. But the most important debate had a constitutional character, concerning the historical dynamics of consensus or that of majority versus minority. On November 6th the National Dialogue was resumed for two days, but without reaching any tangible result, increasing instead the cleavage among the blocs, and provoking on 11th of November again the resignation of the five Shiite ministers, joined now by the Greek-Orthodox representative, considered close to President Emile Lahoud. The big debate and the struggle have been on the application of article 7 of the U.N. Chart and the approving of the international tribunal. Two days later Prime Minister Fouad Siniora would issue the creation of the international tribunal to judge Hariri's assassination without the participation of the resigned ministers.[35] The opposition considered as unconstitutional such action of Siniora's government. The game was played by the opposition on the framework of the Constitution, that wants the council as representative of all the Lebanese communities.[36]

In the middle of the political tension and with the opposition's threats to suddenly recur to the street in order to topple Siniora's government, probably planned for the following Thursday 23rd, on November 21st an armed commando blocked the car of Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel, son of traditional Christian leader and former President Amine Gemayel, and killed him in the Christian area of Jdeide. The same day, with a perfect timing, the Security Council backed the creation of an international tribunal to judge Hariri's assassination, but leaving on Lebanese government the duty to ratify it. The funeral marked the weakness of the 14th

35 The International Tribunal will definitely established in May 2007, according to Article 7 of the U.N. Chart, which makes the action binding on all states, despite the fact that Lebanese government could not officially establish it for lack of internal consensus.

36 The Constitutional debate, and this specific case, will be better analyzed in chapter III.

of March bloc and the factional display of flags and partisan's support for politicians. The mourning and respect for the new martyr Pierre Gemayel, postponed only of a few days the opposition's objective to topple Fouad Siniora's government recurring to the street. A huge demonstration has been staged on December 1st by all the members of the opposition in Riad el Sohl Square, with the following attempt to assemble a no-end sit-in in order to topple Fouad Siniora and to siege him inside the Serail. This kind of demonstration was very similar to the one staged by the former opposition in 2005, when the demonstrators assembled a sit-in in Martyrs' Square to push for Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. Opposition's demonstrators sieged the Serail, closing the entrance from every side, from Riad el Solh, from Zok al Blat and from the area of Wadi Abu Jamil. After few hours the pacific intervention of the Army dissuaded the demonstrators, leaving them with the sit-in in Riad el Sohl Square. The Lebanese Army was officially entering the struggle, but with the clear purpose to represent the security and the stability, in the name of being the only credible national institution.

Both blocs displayed now the idea of being the true representative of Lebanon. Both blocs presented Christian, Shiite, Sunni and Druze representatives, moving in this way the focus to a game of sectarian national legitimacy.

Another framework of the internal struggle was again displayed in the street, but this time not through demonstration, but through millionaire campaigns of advertisement. March 14th block "occupied" the whole country public space through the installation of big red banners with written slogan claiming "I LOVE LIFE", in three languages, a hidden attack to Hezbollah philosophy of martyrdom. The opposition of the 8th of March answered with another millionaire campaign, reproducing the same banners but adding hand-written tags mocking the high-class

standards of the majority coalition.[37]

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37 Deeb, L. (2007). Louder than Bombs. *Middle East Report*, N°242.

G. The Ghost of Sectarian Strife (December 2006 - May 2007)

The days following the beginning of the sit-in of the opposition in Downtown Beirut already gave the Lebanese new martyrs to mourn and celebrate. Tough clashes erupted in sensitive areas with no clear-cut confessional demarcations, opposing mainly Shiite demonstrators coming back from the sit-in in Downtown Beirut to their village, and Sunnis of the Beirut areas of Tarek Jdidè and Kaskas. The "dream" propagated by the international press of an Iraqization of Lebanon, and the consequent sectarian clash between Shiites and Sunnis, became a dark reality also for the Lebanese. Confessional areas in those days resembled much more to real strongholds than to a territory belonging to the state, and new groups arose with confessional and territorial identity.[38] Christians were already divided and it would have not lasted long to see clashes among them. For what concerns Druze, their presence in Beirut has not been so strong to identify themselves with a specific area of the capital. Just as Hanf affirmed in the case of the civil war, the presence of portraits and photographs showed nowadays which group controlled which area (Hanf, 1993, p. 181).

The situation was carrying the fear that the Army was also going to split into confessional lines, reminding of the situation occurred during the civil war.[39] Fortunately the Army kept its national stand under the leadership of General Michel Sleiman, and it assumed a policy of no direct intervention, but of bystander, as defender of the state and national institutions.

Sectarian cleavages were confusing people in Beirut. An example of

38 Azzi, I. (2007, February 28). Beirut neighborhood insists it's no pussycat. Tariq al-Jdideh residents take pride in stylized panther logo. *The Daily Star*.

39 During the civil war the Lebanese national Army split into various confessional factions.

such confusion has been represented by the stance of the Palestinians. In majority Sunnis, but mostly living in predominant Shiite suburbs, the Palestinian split, following the Sunni Mustaqbal movement and the Shiite Hezbollah that was fighting against the everlasting enemy Israel.

The situation deteriorated at the beginning of January and was irreversible at the end of the month. The background was represented on one side by the call of the opposition for a general strike, and on the other side by the conference of the donors of "Lebanon 3" planned for January 25th in Paris, toughly contested by the opposition. On January 23rd at dawn, opposition activists installed roadblocks in sensitive areas or streets around and inside Beirut, on the road to the airport, on the Ring, and in various intersections. Even if the Lebanese Army massively deployed in all Beirut area, it could not stop the intra and inter-sectarian clashes that again took place in sensitive confessional areas like Corniche al Mazraa and Hazmieh. The most common images have been that of tires burning and Lebanese Army troops creating a divisive line between the contending parts. This led to three casualties and several people wounded. The roadblocks disappeared before night, but still the tension remained high all over the country. On January 25th the situation escalated. From a simple discussion at the Arab University between students belonging to different factions, a big fighting erupted in the area around Cola intersection and Mussaitbeh district. Television channels broadcasted the images of burning cars, people escaping and hundreds of supporters with red helmets and sticks coming on minibus to help their respective sides. The arms magically appeared with the escalation, and snipers took position at the top of the buildings. Clashes and occasional shooting reached all the areas of West Beirut. An Al Jazeera cameraman was caught in the middle of the street and shot from different sides by opposite factions. Bunch of *shebeeb* gathered at the entrances of their respective strongholds with wooden sticks in order to protect "their" area and avoid intrusions. The

Army declared a curfew from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. in streets already deserted by the people, and reminding the dark ages of the civil war.[40] The same night at the beginning of the curfew, television channels split between broadcasting Fouad Siniora's live speech from Paris for the conference of donors and Rachid Karame's live speech in Tripoli.

As usual, amnesia spreads in the following days. It was time to commemorate Rafik Hariri's second anniversary assassination. On the eve of February 14th a bomb hit two minibuses coming down from Bikfaya to Beirut, provoking four dead. It was the first time that bombs hit with the clear goal to make a massacre among civilians. Later investigations and local newspapers accused the salafist group of Fatah al-Islam, that would, few months later, take the national stage in Nahr el Bared Palestinian camp in Northern Lebanon.

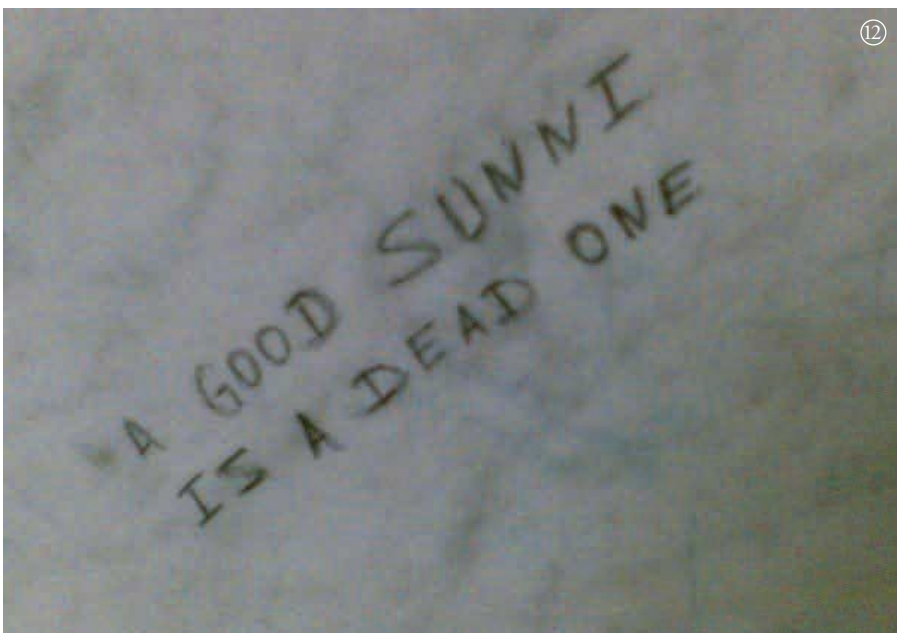
March 14th celebrations represented again the resurrection of the majority coalition that was resisting the attempt of being toppled by the opposition. For the first time, the two blocs found themselves almost face to face in Downtown Beirut. Amid high tension and with only a fence dividing the urban space of the two contenders, a huge mass reached Martyrs' Square.

The country was in a stalemate, and the institutions have been blocked since November. On April 23rd the press reported the news of the disappearance of two Sunni guys, with traditional family affiliation to the mostly Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), opening again the doors to a sectarian revenge.[41] Leaders called not to spread sectarian hostile feel-

40 May, T. (2007, January, 25). ISF reports final count of 3 dead, 175 wounded, 135 arrested. *The Daily Star*; Azzi, I and Ghazal, R. (2007, January, 26). Rival mobs plunge Beirut into anarchy. Army imposes curfew to end mayhem between pro- and anti-government rioters. *The Daily Star*.

41 L'enlèvement de Ziad Ghandour et de Ziad Kabalan provoque une très forte tension dans le pays. Berry multiplie les efforts pour une médiation et Aridi trouve suspect le timing du kidnapping. (2007, April, 26). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

ing: the two boys, one 24 years-old and the other 12 years-old, were found dead in the outskirts of Beirut. Investigations involved members of a Shiite clan that lost a family member during last January clashes and took a sectarian revenge. No one was found accountable for the crime. Leaders, in a continuous exchange of accuses, worked to low the tension, but none made them accountable for creating the socio-political condition for such crime. The funeral of the two guys in Beirut hardened the sectarian tension in the country between Shiites and Sunnis, and at the funeral celebration masses chanted against Shiites and its leader Hassan Nasrallah.



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Meanwhile on May 30, the United Nations Security Council authorized the formation of an international tribunal to try the suspects in

Hariri's assassination.[42]

H. On the Road to Baabda (June 2007 – December 2007)

The stalemate in the internal political situation was shacked by the events that occurred in May and June. On May 20th the Lebanese discovered that a radical Sunni groups with a strong salafist ideology and allegedly affiliates to Al-Qaeda, was acting within the country. The situation blurred as they were residing and growing within the "oasis" of the Palestinian camps, outspread in the whole Lebanon.[43] Over the previous years Lebanese heard the news of *katyusha* rockets fired from Lebanon to Israel, claimed by Palestinian organizations, but they heard also of the mysterious groups of Usbat al Ansar, Jund al Sham, Fatah al Intifada or the brand new Fatah al Islam, all residing between Ain al-Hilweh camp in Sidon and the Northern Palestinian camps. The same day of the bloody sectarian clashes of January 25th, Lebanese television channels broadcasted, before the internal clashes started, the interview of a well armed guy in the Palestinian camp of Ain al-Hilweh, that day under siege by the national Army in a clash that provoked many victims.

The same presence of a salafist Sunni group paved the way for a political confrontation. On one side accusing the majority of having financed such groups in order to contrast the Shiite Middle East emergence, and on the other side, accusing the group of being a tool in the hands of the Syrian regime in order to destabilize Lebanon.

A bank robbing on May 19th and the following raid of the officers to an

42 See the text of U.N. Resolution 1757 at: http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/RES/1757(2007).

43 Through an informal agreement the Lebanese Army is not allowed to enter the various Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

house in the Northern Lebanese town of Tripoli, provoked the reaction of the Fatah al Islam militants from their headquarter in Nahr el Bared Palestinian camp. The army location outside the camp was attacked causing tens of death and starting the siege of Nahr el Bared camp, a siege that will last until the beginning of September, causing the almost complete destruction of the camp, a new wave of Palestinian refugees that fled to the nearby Beddawi camp, more than two-hundreds militants convicted, more than one-hundreds soldiers dead, but with the mysterious escape of sheikh al-Abbsi, the supposed leader of the group. War in the North also meant escalation in the whole Lebanon, from Beirut to the South. Beirut has been hit by five bombs in the following twenty days since the beginning of the conflict in the North, creating among the population the fear of massive assassination's attempts, and deserting the streets of the capital. The street of Beirut started to be filled with posters and adds requiring people to leave an address or a telephone number in case the car was left parked in a stranger area. All these bombs displayed the same typology of the 2005 summer bombs in commercial districts, provoking only few dead and basically heightening the tension. The targets were closely related to fiefdoms of the political majority, especially the bombs in the heart of the Sunni district of Verdun, ABC shopping center in Ashrafiyye and the Druze town of Aley.

On June 13th a bomb exploded around the Corniche area in the afternoon. The bomb targeted Sunni lawmaker Walid Eido, member of the Mustaqbal movement, and marked the revival of political assassination after the November killing of Minister of Industry Pierre Gemayel. The members of the majority of government directly accused Syria of thwarting the Lebanese government, in an attempt to reduce its number of MPs before the Presidential elections, and lowering their power either in the Cabinet either in the Chamber.

Few days later, on Sunday 17th, two rockets fired from Lebanon fell on Israel border town of Kiryat Shmona, damaging houses and facilities, and opening again the Southern front. One week later, Spanish troops of the UNIFIL corps were victim of a car bomb that exploded while they were patrolling the area in the outskirt of Khiam, provoking six victims among the peacekeepers. It was the first time that UNIFIL troops have been attacked, in an attempt to involve them in the internal Lebanese struggles. Less than one month later, Tanzanian peacekeepers escaped an assassination attempt too.

Public discussion, reinforced especially by an article of notorious Pulitzer prize journalist Seymour Hersh that considered the interest of Americans and regional partners to support radical Sunni factions against the Shiite resurgence in the region backed by Iran, provoked a deep cleavage between Sunni and Shiite communities in Lebanon, invoking a next

big clash between them.[44]

But Sunnis and Shiites left in August the field free for intra-sectarian fight among Christian factions. The government majority called for by-elections to replace the seats of assassinated MPs, Walid Eido and Pierre Gemayel, that should have taken place on August 5th. The competition displayed a strong confrontation between Michel Khury, Aoun's candidate, and Amin Gemayel that was candidate to fill the seat in the Metn region of his son Pierre. The rhetoric displayed a fight of Christians against Christians and, considering the nearby first round of the presidential election planned for September, represented the stage where to display the predominance within the community and exemplifying the appropriate candidate for that office. Unfortunately for both, the reduced victory of Michel Khury and the continuous insults and attacks between the two sides, provoked the defeat of both figures and weakened the whole Christian community at the dawn of a delicate election and the attempt of appropriation of the office by a Christian legitimate representative.[45]

On perfect timing for the run for the presidential election, the war in Nahr al Bared was over, and an informal candidature to the presidency of Army commander Michel Sleiman was being raised, in a moment that the Army was gaining wide support from the Lebanese population and it was considered as the only institution able to gather Lebanese from different communities.

In such confusing circumstances for the country and for the Christian community in particular, the Maronite bishops and the Patriarch Sfeir got involved in the process for the election of the new President. Either invoked by the majority, either by international actors, the Patriarch submitted a list of possible candidates to the two blocs. At the same time,

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44 Hersh, S. (2007, March 3) The Redirection, *The New Yorker*.

45 On the Metn by-elections of August 2007 see: Young, M. (2007, August 7). A victory on the path to oblivion. *The Daily Star*.

on August 31st, the Speaker of the Parliament, Nabih Berry, delivered a speech during the commemoration of the disappearance of Musa al Sadr in Baalbeck, proposing a deal between the opposition and the government in order to break the long stalemate and in preparation for the end of Lahoud's term. The former was going to dismiss the opposition's project to tear down Siniora government, but the majority would have agreed on a candidate of consensus, excluding in this way the use of a simple majority election of the President, with which the same March 14th bloc was threatening the opposition, but that was going against the idea of consensus that shapes the Lebanese political system.

Few days after the beginning of the Ramadan, on September 19th, and in the middle of the debate for the election of the new President, Antoine Ghanem, lawmaker for the majority, was killed by a bomb while passing through the Christian neighborhood of Sin el Fill. Again the funeral represented a moment of condemnation, but also displayed, due to the low number of mourners, the weakness of the majority at the government and of their followers.

The Lebanese population was expressing frustration and fear due to the political situation and new campaigns by the national civil society were promoted in order to maintain the hope and dismiss the ghost of the civil war[46]. At the same time, national civil society strongly polarized on the lines of the two political sides, while the population that was not aligned with any of the two sides remained in silence and with no voice or no options to speak out their frustration for the situation within the

46 The new association *Khalass*, mainly composed of an inter-sectarian affiliation, attempted to aware the population through a campaign and a petition. The role of civil society will be better discussed in chapter III and chapter IV. On the frustration of the Lebanese population after the wave of assassinations see: Merhi, N. (2007, October 4). Ils étaient plusieurs milliers hier à exprimer leur solidarité avec les familles Chikhani, Medlej et Ghanem. Du BIEL à la place de l'Étoile, un message de non-violence et de paix. *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

country.[47]

The planned discussions within the Parliament planned by Speaker Nabih Berry, could not reach the consensus among the different factions on the election of a President and they were being postponed one after the other. The rooms of the Chamber became a place for conversation. Opposition and majority lawmakers have been showed by Lebanese television channels in moments of relax and laughing together, while the whole population feared a civil strife. It was displayed what Hudson called many decades ago as "the harmonious contacts among the elites."[48]

On November 23rd, last day of Lahoud's term in office, as consequence of the impossibility in reaching an agreement on the name of the candidate, the Presidency of the Republic remained vacant. Lahoud, while leaving the Baabda palace at midnight, addressed a fiery speech on LBC television implicitly accusing Siniora's government of the chaos in the country, and leaving the Army with the duty of preserve the national stability.

The following morning the Lebanese woke up in a surreal atmosphere, wondering if the civil war was going to start or what would have happened next. Soon they realized that the only solution was to going back to life, accepting the situation and ignoring the political fight that was affecting their life.

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47 See the text of a petition signed by various Lebanese individuals that auto-proclaimed themselves as "civil society", but which content resembles the position of the March 14th block. See: An appeal for the sake of the republic. (2007, November 12). *The Daily Star*.

48 Hudson, M. C. (1968). *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon*. New York: Random House. pp. 146-147.

I. Epilogue. Overview of Three Years

The events occurred in the three years following Rafik Hariri's assassination could be read through different perspectives. On one side it is possible to consider them as an attempt by the majority that came out from the June 2005 elections of achieving a real independence for the country, as the majority representatives repeated constantly in these years. Furthermore it is possible to interpret the events as a fight between two political blocs with different regional and international affiliations, as local and international press labels them: pro-Syrian, anti-Syrian, American backed government, Syrian and Iranian backed opposition, on and on.

But for the aim of this research it is important to underline that, beside of what could also be a political struggle among different Lebanese communities for the power-sharing, communitarian feelings reached an important stage in these years, that can label this phase as the "ages of sectarianism", in which the confessional system is on its way of being reshaped again or is going to degenerate leading the country to a civil strife. As we will describe, the events can also be explained as a consequence of a conjunction of local and regional/international factors.

The Christian community came out from the civil war in a weak condition, with the power of the President reduced to almost a protocol office, and many of its traditional leaders in a harmless condition. These leaders, from abroad or from within the borders of the country started to stand up after 2000, with the concomitant death of Syrian President Hafez al Assad and the withdrawal from the South of Lebanon of Israeli's troops. At the same time Emile Lahoud and Rafik Hariri relationship deteriorated day by day. Already in opposition to the Syrian protectorate in Lebanon, and backed by the Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, they found an alliance in 2004, at the edge of the renovation of Lahoud's mandate, and join the mainly Druze claim exemplified by Jumblatt vehe-

ment opposition to the renewal of Lahoud's mandate. The assassination of Rafik Hariri in February 2005 made then easily for the doubtful Sunni community to jump into *Intifada al-Istiqlal*, against and in opposition to the rulers in Damascus.

Was *Intifada al-Istiqlal* a spontaneous rebellion of Lebanese civilians against the occupation of Lebanese territory, or a Sunni-Druze-Christian coalition against Damascus, in name of a real appropriation of the power within the country? Definitely none of the two, but probably a bit of both. There were ingredients of spontaneous reaction and of communal mobilization: the latter would have prevailed at the end. On the other side, the Shiite community felt alone and compacted, even if at the very beginning the "revolution" did not take such a confessional connotation, helped by local and international press classifying the uprising as a revolution of citizens in name of freedom and for a nationalist independence. After Syrian's withdrawal, it became an internal struggle for the new repartition of power, and the focus moved on the repartition of the main offices, with a special emphasis on the last direct Syrian bastion in Lebanon, that was represented by President Emile Lahoud. Too many different actors have been playing within the Christian communities, all with populist strong personalities and historical frictions that made them split very soon, either in the first elections, either in the formation of the Cabinet. The following polarization in two main political blocs showed the attempt of both sides, looking for a constitutional recognition, to be the real representatives of the Lebanese, displaying instead the clash between two ideas of Lebanon. That was basically true. On both sides there were Christians, Druzes, Sunnis, Shiites, Armenians and non-confessional parties. This provoked a deep cleavage among the different conflicting sides, and legitimacy was always attempted to being showed in public, through streets gathering and demonstrations.

The practice of confessional allocation of seats and offices, and the

need to have a Cabinet representative of all communities, contributed to make of Lebanon a field of struggle between communities. The presidential election represented an obvious example of such situation and showed how the power-sharing struggle could be between opposite communities but also within the community.

The main feeling of the Lebanese in these years was that of going back and "find refuge" in their own community, or to one of its clusters, such as a leader, a family or a confessional party. The continuous call by leaders of the ghost of disappearing, or of being under threat, increased exponentially in the name of fear, even if it was balanced by a nationalist struggle for freedom, democracy and sovereignty. In the three years taken here into consideration, community/confessional marks increased especially in Beirut, taking the forms of graffiti, paintings, posters and flags. After the massive displaying of Lebanese flags that reached the top on 14th of March of 2005, the movement took a particularistic direction. Especially after January 2007, flags of undeclared confessional parties suddenly appeared in every corner or streets. In the aftermath of January 2007 events, also groups with a confessional-space accent arose, as it is an example the tigers of Tarek Jdidè, a Sunni area where most of the clashes occurred in these years. The confessional feeling became so acute that Lebanese authorities banned public audience in football matches, considering that also Lebanese football teams almost follow a confessional belonging.[49] The ban on the use of military clothes[50] and the continuous rumors on army training of militia belonging to the various Lebanese factions, are also clear examples of the escalation of the tension in the country.[51]

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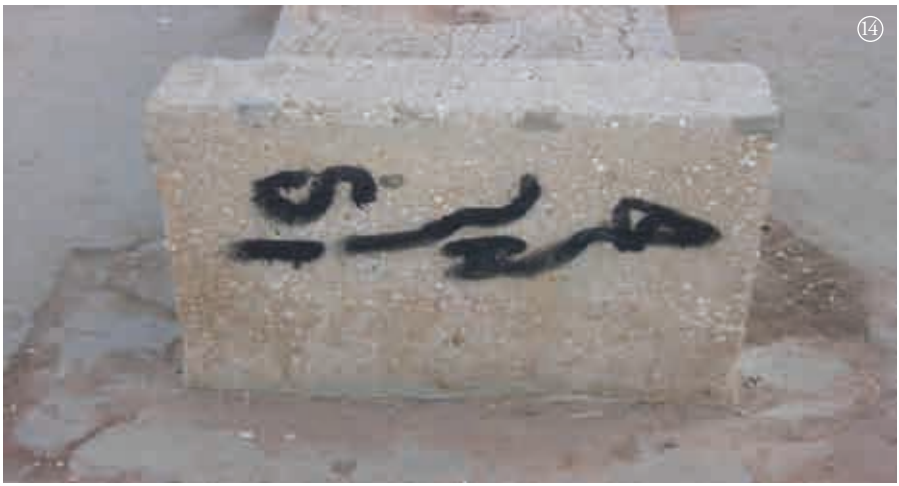
49 Lebanon's empty football stadiums. (2007, November 10). *Al Jazeera English*.
50 Military apparel banned for civilians in Lebanon (2007, December 6). *L'Orient - Le Jour*.
51 Blanford, N. (2007, November 7). Lebanon's militias rearm before vote. *The Christian Science Monitor*; Ghazal, R. (2007, September 25). 'Opposition, March 14 camps conducting armed training'. Cabinet confirms reports after marathon meeting. *The Daily Star*.



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The demarcation of the public space has been also a consequence of the demarcation of *al-balad*, the Solidere-made Beirut central district. While March 14th staged most of its demonstrations around Martyrs' Square, in the low side of Downtown, March 8th bloc decided to stage its demonstrations around Riad el Sohl Square, in front of the United Nations building, occupying that place with an endless sit-in. The surreal encounter in the urban space of the capital happened on 14th of February of 2007, for the second anniversary of Hariri's assassination, amid high security army deployment.

Lebanese individuals split between polarization and community of belonging. The geographical situation resulted also incisive in terms of communitarian feelings. It will not be difficult to find in the Druze mountains feelings of fear and of being threatened. In places of middle and high classes like the American University of Beirut (AUB), the confessional identity became a very sensitive topic, as normal classes are mixed. Shiites especially were felt, until Michel Aoun surprisingly joined them, as the "Problem of Lebanon", labeled often as anti-Lebanese, and

with an Iranian agenda, due to the strict relation between Iran and main Shiite movement, Hezbollah, and they often had to publicly underline their Lebanese identity.[52]

It was not always possible to define the sectarian identity as the only feeling moving people, like for example during the civil war, but it is clear that the sectarian feelings increased in these years. Sectarian feelings increased proportionally with the increase of the tones in the political struggle. The regional situation, following United States invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the following split of the country in three regions strictly characterized by the confessional affiliation, Shiite, Sunni and Kurd, certainly influenced Lebanon, or at least the mainstream media influenced the sectarian theories helping in increasing the confessional cleavage between the various Lebanese communities. Not least, especially in the last year of this research, the dangerous situation of Christians in Iraq and the attacks in Lebanon that mostly targeted Christian figures and places, increased the feeling of the Christian population to be a community under threat, especially in Lebanon, the only place where Christians are not minorities in terms of power or second citizenship.

In these years non-confessional actors were wiped out from political discussion and could not find any role in the power-sharing process. The question if this is a consequence of the confessional system should be open.

The continuous feeling of frustration, that Messarra called as the *ibhat*, as a recurrent feeling among the Lebanese, pervaded ordinary Lebanese in their attempt of living a stable and normal life (Messarra, 2000, p. 319).

The idea of reshaping the political system in terms of power repartition and the indirect attempts to question the consensual system heightened in the last years, due especially to the vacant role have been left by the

52 Hatoum, L. (2006, September 1). Berri stresses Shiites' committment to Lebanon as their sole country under Taif Accord. *The Daily Star*.

Syrian withdrawal and the new situation created in 2005, leaving the space for a struggle of power within the system, that had finally a strong impact on the dynamics of the public sphere, on a national and on a communal level.

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI
RECLAIMING THE COMMUNITY PUBLIC SPHERE:
COMMUNAL INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES AND THE LEBANESE SYSTEM
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III. Communities, Individuals and the System

Don Paolo prese allora la carta del re di denari in mano e domandò a Michele:
"Credi tu che questa carta abbia un valore per se stesso, oppure che l'abbia ricevuto?"
Michele rispose: "Essa vale più delle altre, di per sé, essendo il re di denari".
"Questa carta ha un valore fisso o variabile?" disse ancora il prete. "Vale il re di denari, in tutti i giochi, a tresette, a briscola, a scopa, sempre lo stesso oppure varia di valore?".
"Varia sempre di valore" disse Michele. "Varia secondo i giochi."
"Chia ha inventato i giochi?" disse il prete.
Nessuno rispose.
"Non credete che il gioco sia stato inventato dai giocatori?" suggerì il prete.
Vari acconsentirono subito. Di tutta evidenza i giochi erano stati inventati dai giocatori.
Il prete concluse:
"Se questa carta ha un valore variabile, secondo l'accordo e la fantasia dei giocatori, a me pare che voi potete fare quello che vi pare". (Silone, 1996 [1937], pp. 138-139).

> "The Lebanese Republic is one of the most unusual states in the world. It is a conglomeration of paradoxes and contradictions" (Hudson, 1968, p. 3)

Hudson's assumption is not completely false. Without a doubt, Lebanon is a quite peculiar country. The Lebanese political system certainly represents the main peculiarity of this country. It is undisputed that the Lebanese political system represents a unique form of governing the state, if compared at a regional level or international level. Lebanon is a constitutional parliamentary Republic that assumes the shape of a multi-communal state. Institutionally, individuals' confessional affiliation is the first source of identity for the Lebanese. The Lebanese political system is based on a mixture of collective rights and a compulsory double communal/national identity for its individuals. On the other side, the political system generates periodical struggles for power among the various confessional communities, or at least among the figures that mainly rule such communities. Furthermore, the political and administrative representation of the various recognized Lebanese communities is numerically balanced and it follows demographic and historical considerations.

The uniqueness of the Lebanese political system, not to be confounded with that of its society, has always been source for a rich field of interpretations. On one side, the Lebanese system has been often labeled as a consociational democracy, a liberal democracy, a multi-communal system or just a simple communal system. On the other side it has been sometimes perceived as the field of confessionalism or sectarianism, denoting in this latter case a trouble-free application of the term, as we will try to highlight in this chapter. Lebanon has been studied through different other approaches too. On one hand Lebanon has been analyzed from a conflict perspective, on the other hand in terms of coexistence between different communities, and in few cases as a class struggle for power or as an example of multicultural society. Such brief overview helps providing

an idea of the various modalities that are possible to find in the study of the Lebanese political system and its society.

What has been missed in these different approaches to the Lebanese system is that it is not always possible to consider a political system only from an institutional perspective. It is in the same idea of "system" to create informal rules that touch the totality of the people social realm.[53] The question concerning the level of democracy of the country, or the usual statement "Lebanon is the only democratic country in the Middle East", well explains such issue. It is not questionable the fact that Lebanon, among its regional neighbors, is one of the countries that more clearly presents democratic institutions. However it is necessary to analyze this assumption in depth and to make a distinction between the institutional realm and the reality within the country. The continuous call for democracy often displayed by national political actors of all sides, confessions and ideologies, need to be taken into consideration in order to show the abuse in the implementation of this term.

The main actors of the Lebanese political system attempt to publicly play within the institutional framework and according to the rules of the game, but looking in depth at such rules, it becomes evident that the same rules of the games are instead mostly informal, unwritten or encoded. Such condition permits Lebanese political actors to play in various informal ways, abusing or interpreting the supposed rules following their own momentary interests. As it has been the case of the run for the presidency, from Hariri's assassination to November 2007, each national

53 According to the Oxford English Dictionary, one of the meanings of the word "system" is: "the prevailing political or social order, especially when regarded as oppressive". I suggest here that the Lebanese political system assumes such connotation of "system" for the reasons I will better explain later in this chapter and that mainly deals with the pervasive role of the so-called sectarianism in Lebanese people daily life. The terms "system" and "political system" will be used here almost as synonymous, being the former an indirect consequence of the latter.

actor tried to act within the constitutional framework. The Constitution instead, being the main source for establishing the rules of the game, still represents a blurring paper, which, as a consequence, the various actors continuously interpret in different ways. All these considerations shed light on the fact that the Lebanese "system" is composed of an institutional framework and of various informal segments. The institutional framework and such informal clusters need to be taken into consideration in order to move the focus on the analysis of the community public sphere.

Lebanon will be considered in this study as a confessional system. Such peculiar political system has been established with the idea of providing each community, or minority, with rights, and emphasizing the idea of power-sharing among the main Lebanese confessional communities. Although the Lebanese political system has been periodically reshaped, the basic structure of the political system did not considerably change since the end of the nineteenth century, but just in the repartition of the power-sharing.

This chapter will present a historical background of the Lebanese political system and will focus on the role of the communities within such system. It will then place the Lebanese individuals within the system and attempt to show those informal factors that influence the system in its functioning. This chapter will also consider the various attempts to change the country's political system, or to erase it, and the vicious circle that such efforts could signify. Such vicious circle mainly affects Lebanese individuals.

As the aim of the study is to analyze the community's public sphere, this chapter will attempt to shed light on the importance of moving the focus from the national to the almost neglected dynamics within the communities, in order to better understand the Lebanese public sphere. Furthermore, the study of such segments of the Lebanese system will be

useful in order to extrapolate in the next chapter the variables that will be applied to the analysis of the selected communities.

A. Birth of a System

1. From the Double *Kaimakans* to Greater Lebanon: Drafting the System

The biennium 1841-1842 has been an important turning point in Lebanon's modern history. On one hand it marked the end of the relative autonomy of the so-called area of Mount Lebanon, under the indirect rule of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, it marked the birth of the actual Lebanese political system, grounding it on the confessional identity as main factor of reference.[54] Following the peasants' uprisings that erupted in this region in 1841, that soon took the shape of a confessional strife between its two most populous communities, the Druze and the Maronite, the Ottoman Empire intervened in Mount Lebanon in order to re-establish the order and close the historical parenthesis of relative autonomy the region was enjoying. The Ottomans, supported by an already strong presence of European powers, created two autonomous districts in Mount Lebanon, the *Kaimakans*: one mostly Maronite, and the other characterized by a Druze majority, but with a strong presence of Maronite peasants. The creation of the double *Kaimakans* did not directly help resolving the tense situation in Mount Lebanon.[55] Few years

54 On the shaping of the Lebanese confessional system with reference to the idea of modernity, see: Makdisi, U. S. (2000). *The Culture of Sectarianism: community, history, and violence in nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

55 It is possible to consider the double *kaimakans* as a form of territorial federalism. In the current Lebanese political system regional belonging is instead not relevant for the definition of the population. It is based indeed on a non-geographical affiliation to one

later, in 1845, a second *Haraka* erupted in both districts, pushing the Ottomans to create another institution that better shaped the confessional participation. The Ottomans established a Council of five members that gathered the representatives of the most prominent communities of the region: Sunni, Druze, Maronite, Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic. The Council had the main objective to assess the governors of both districts (Hanf, 1993, p. 59).[56] The confessional system was taking a shape, considering that five of the six actual most influential Lebanese communities were represented in such Council.[57]

The third *Haraka*, that started in 1858, brought to a more direct intervention of the Ottomans and of foreign powers in order to stop the clashes that also took the shape of a confessional conflict. In 1861 the Ottomans established the autonomous Governorate of Mount Lebanon, the *Mutasarrifyya*, from the name of the *Mutasarrif*, the non Arab Ottoman Christian's ruler of the region. The *Mutasarrif* was assisted by an Administrative Council of twelve members, two from each community, including now the Shiite community. Such consultative council, at the beginning based on an equal representation, was reshaped in 1864 in a proportional representation, with a balance in favor of the Christians confessions, with a ratio of seven to five members (Hanf, 1993, p. 61).[58] The novelty of the *Mutasarrifyya*, if compared with the precedent *Kaimakan* system, relied upon a personal federalism based on the confessional affiliation of the

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of the recognized confessional communities.

56 Such initiative took the name of Reglement Chakib Effendi, from the name of the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs.

57 The Shiite community did not enjoy of a formal recognition within the Ottoman Empire. The Shiite community will achieve a first formal institutional recognition in a second phase, when the political system will be based on the confessional affiliation of the inhabitants.

58 Such initiative marked the introduction in the political system of the proportional representation. See: Hanf, T. (1993). *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon. Decline of a State and birth of a Nation*. London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, p. 86.

single individual. The system based on confessional quotas was already established, and it was going to be shaped fast toward the current contemporary conditions. It was already possible to recognize the presence of communal quotas in a representative council and the autonomy in terms of personal status for each community, that are at the base of the actual Lebanese political system (Picard, 2002, pp. 21-22; Traboulsi, 2007, pp. 24-27 and p. 43).

Two factors need to be taken into consideration with reference to such historical period: the "modernization" of the Ottoman Empire, and the special status Mount Lebanon enjoyed until 1841. Mount Lebanon constituted an autonomous region since the sixteenth century (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 3) and it was under the indirect rule of the Ottoman Empire, in which notables or local governors had the special duty to recollect taxes and deal directly with the Ottoman authorities (Hanf, 1993, p. 54).[59] The other form of dominion established by the Ottomans was that of the *millet* system, that was giving autonomy in the administration of their affairs to non-Muslim communities of the Empire. The leaders of such communities were to be confirmed by the Ottomans on a personal membership and not on territorial criteria (Hanf, 1993, p. 53). This second form of indirect rule was at the base of the *tanzimat*, the reforms the Ottoman Empire undertook in the nineteenth century, under constant foreign pressures. In the middle of Mount Lebanon reshaping, the Ottomans undertook different reforms and promulgated a Constitution, with the main aim of creating a "modern" citizenship for all the inhabitants, based on individual belonging to the Empire and, as a consequence, erasing the communal belonging (Rabbath, 1986, pp. 36-49).[60]

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59 Such form of taxes' collection is going under the name of *iqta* system.

60 Such period of reforms within the Ottoman Empire began in 1839 with the Gulhane Edict and lasted, after various reforms, in 1876 with the promulgation of the Constitution.

The period preceding the First World War prepared strong changes in the *mutasarrifiyya* system. First, in 1912, the administrative council was enlarged to fourteenth members and extended its powers (Rabbath, 1986, p. 232; Traboulsi, 2007, p. 51). Two years later, with the involvement of the Ottoman in the war, the autonomy of Mount Lebanon was remitted. The world war drove to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and brought to the establishment of a French Mandate on Mount Lebanon. The French Mandate, under the aegis of the League of Nations that put a special emphasis on minority rights, led to the definition of Lebanon as a geographical entity on September 1st 1920. The option that was adopted was that called of "Greater Lebanon", in which other geographical territories, such as the regions of the Beeka, Jebel Amil, Akkar and the coastal cities included Beirut, were attached to Mount Lebanon.[61] After a brief reformulation of the council, and the creation of a more representative council in 1922 (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 88), the Lebanese system took its definitive shape in institutional terms with the Constitution of 1926 and the establishment of the Lebanese Republic.

2. From the Written Constitution to the "Gentlemen's" National Pact

The Constitution transformed the council in the Chamber of Deputies, it created a Senate, that lasted only one year, and some of the Constitution's articles, like 9, 10 and 95, were already putting the accent on communal rights, a legacy of the League of Nations and of prominent local actors like the Lebanese thinker Michel Chiha. The French opted for shaping Lebanon as a country of religious minorities (Traboulsi, 2007,

61 The other possible options that were disputed at that time were basically that of the creation of a small Lebanon, or that of a formal annexation to Syria. The latter option has been particularly promoted by the Lebanese Muslim communities. Until 1943, date of the formal independence, such opposite positions continued to face one another.

p. 91). Article 9 for example granted the Lebanese communities with the right to rule their own personal status and article 10 allowed the communities to have their own educational institutions. Article 95 assumed instead a fair share of the administrative offices among the various Lebanese communities.[62] The same writings of Michel Chiha well exemplify how much special emphasis was given to the rights for minorities and communities:

> "Le Liban est un pays de minorités confessionnelles associées. Toutes les minorités doivent y trouver leur place et y obtenir leurs droits. C'est la raison d'être de ce pays et c'est son originalité. À tous ceux qui le méritent, le Liban offre une patrie. Il l'a toujours fait" (Chiha, 1964, p. 44).

Year 1932 marked the unique census conducted in Lebanese history. The importance of such initiative is given by the fact that the quotas allocation is based on that census, which defined a Maronite demographic predominance that will be translated in terms of power in holding the main state offices and in the political quotas in the Chamber of Deputies.[63]

Already divided in two sides by the previous debate on the establishment of Greater Lebanon,[64] the new Lebanon presented the same conditions when it reached the moment to put an end to the French mandate and gain a real independence, around the biennium 1942-1943. On October 7th 1943 Bechara el Khuri and Riad el Solh "signed" the unwritten National Pact and they revised the country's Constitution. Article 95 of the Constitution was extended in order to include, as a provisional meas-

62 A better analysis of the constitutional framework of the confessional system will be done in the next paragraphs.
63 For the first time, in 1936, it was proposed a civil law to rule the personal status. The proposal was admitted but not lasted longer, especially due to the rejection of the main religious communities leaders.
64 The other option at stake was that of maintaining Lebanon as a part of Syria.

ure, a confessional share of the seats in the Cabinet, something necessary to be underlined cause of its reprise in Lebanese institutional history. The ratio of the confessional sharing within the Chamber was established in six to five in favor of the Christian communities. It was informally sanctioned that the President of the Republic would have been a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shiite Muslim.[65] The National Pact of 1943 represented a pact among Lebanese elites, and the country reasoned less in terms of communities and more in terms of relation between Christians and Muslims (Picard, 2002, p. 69). Makdisi's words well shed light on the role of the national elites in shaping the National Pact:

> "Presented to the people as a fait accompli, the National Pact, itself a result of elite compromises essentially legitimated a system of patronage and a division of spoils among the elites of the new nation-state, thus betraying the inability to locate a genuinely national base. The Maronite elites were guaranteed the presidency, the Sunnis the prime ministership and the Shi'a the speaker of parliament" (Makdisi, 1996).

Two scholars highlight some features of the Lebanese Constitution that would then going to shape the Lebanese state, and that need to be taken here into consideration. Traboulsi underlines how the Constitution of 1926 officially adopted a communitarian political system and it soon represented a strong dichotomy between subject and citizen (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 109). Hanf underlines instead how the Lebanese Constitution makes of Lebanon a pure consociational system, and that the country is always governed by a grand coalition of communities (Hanf, 1993,

65 Until 1943 it has not been clearly established the confessional allocation of the main offices. After the proclamation of the independence it became an unwritten rule that did not change until nowadays.

p. 73). Both authors raise three issues that will be analyzed in the next paragraphs: the idea of power-sharing within a consociational system, the issue that concerns citizenship, and the double role the Constitution expresses regarding the role of the individuals.

3. From Crossroads to Compulsory Coexistence

In the following years, the institutional framework that was shaping the Lebanese state did not basically change, but it has been the field of struggle between opposite sides in order to gain more power in the power-sharing system. President Fuad Chehab in 1958, facing Muslim's frustration to Maronite predominance, opted for an equal share of public offices allocations between Christians and Muslims.[66] Furthermore, in 1958 and for the first time since its establishment, Lebanon had to face the serious threat of an internal civil strife (Hudson, 1968, pp. 105-116).

The destruction of the country's institutions became a reality in 1975 with the outbreak of the civil war. The internal strife, consequence of many coincident factors, was characterized at the beginning by a fight between a progressive secular coalition, allied with Palestinian forces, against a mostly Christian nationalist bloc worried of losing power and predominance within the country. The civil war soon became a non-sense: the various factions made and broke alliances, and the fight shifted continuously from inter-confessional to intra-confessional. One of the main consequences of the civil strife has been the division of the country in mostly homogeneous confessional areas. As a consequence, the dominant logic of struggle for power, became a struggle over the predominance

66 It is important to shed light on Fuad Chehab's government and consider that phase as a period when the institutions of the state were retrieving power from the communities. Chehab's mandate represents for many analysts the moment in which the state had a prominent role as public institutions for all the Lebanese.

in a canton or in a specific geographic territory, with increased feelings of fear of the others.

The war ended with the agreement shaped by the main Lebanese actors involved in the war and various foreign powers. The new National Pact among the Lebanese confessional communities was signed in the Saudi town of Taef. The system was going to be reshaped with the institutional entrance of new actors in the political spectrum, mostly coming from the ranks of those militias that characterized the long years of the civil war. The Pact of National Understanding did not propose anything new and different from what it was already planned in 1976 (Picard, 2002, p. 156; Maila, 1992, pp. 11-14).[67] The ratio in the political quota was reformed to five to five, the article 95 of the Constitution was going to be abolished soon, and the political actors opted for an overtake of the confessional system as soon as possible. From a religious perspective of division of the country between Christians and Muslims, the system opened the cleavage and the polarization assuming a more confessional accent, especially due to the formal institution of the *troika*, characterized by a better division of power between Prime Minister, President of the Republic and Speaker of the Parliament.[68]

Community leaders have been the main actors of the deal, helped by the foreign assistance of Syria and Saudi Arabia. The former country "occupied" Lebanon, while the latter helped providing the Cabinet and the Sunni Prime Minister with a special strong power, and it was preparing the entrance of Rafik Hariri in Lebanese politics. The Taef agreements meant also a solidification of political communitarianism, in which the power of the Cabinet representing all the Lebanese communities increased

67 In 1976 it was already planned a similar reshape of the country political system, but the various factions did not reach an agreement.

68 The actual division of the Parliament is of 64 seats for Muslim communities and 64 seats for Christian communities. After the Taef Agreement, Syria rised to 128 the seats of the Parliament, although such arrangement was not planned in the agreements.

enormously (Hanf, 1993, pp. 585-589).

When the hostilities lasted in 1990, Lebanon was divided more than before, not only along religious lines (Christian and Muslims), but also along confessional lines, particularly within the Muslim communities (El-Khazen, 1991, p. 54). While the previous conflict was mainly on the Christian-Muslim divide, the Taef agreement and the emergence of the Shiite community political awareness influenced the whole functioning of the system, shaping the country as a field of conflict among diverse communities. The Syrian presence in the country, and its role as "arbiter", was able to freeze the struggle for power among the various communities and the changes in the political system until 2005.[69] The Syrian withdrawal in 2005 exacerbated the tension within the country and would lead to the attempt of shaping a new national pact among the Lebanese factions and, as a consequence, to a new repartition of power among the Lebanese confessional communities.

B. The Institutional System: Confessionalism, Consociationalism and Sectarianism

1. On Terminology

During a two-day conference organized by well-known Lebanese think tank Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) in June 2006,[70] on the

69 The only form of public confrontation to the Syrian regime in Lebanon has been represented in the post-war era by various Christian groups, which faced a strong repression from the regime. Christian communities have been affected by the Taef agreement and the Syrian occupation of the country for various reasons: the electoral law was weakening them and the jailing and exile of Christian leaders such as Geagea and Aoun.

70 LCPS, Workshop on "Between Political and Cultural Pluralism: The Evolution of National Cohesion and Concepts of Citizenship in Lebanon and Iraq", 16-17 June

situation in Iraq and Lebanon, the official translators used to translate the Arabic term *taifiyya*, the common Lebanese Arabic term to define the Lebanese political system, indistinctly with the English words confessionalism or sectarianism. The translation in French of the term *taifiyya* was instead with the simple expression "système confessionnel". Questioned on the issue, the translators replied that confessionalism and sectarianism can be used as synonymous in English language, meanwhile only in French the possible translation of *taifiyya* into sectarianism can assume a negative connotation.[71] Without pondering the translators' correctness of the answer, or their skill with political science terminology, the anecdote is useful in order to advance some considerations on the terminological issue.

First, it seems necessary to underline the difficult application of Western terminology to a stranger reality, with the consequent translation of an Arabic term with a term that takes into consideration space and time.[72] While the term sectarianism could provoke a stronger impact on the audience, it also denotes a superficial use of the term.[73] Sectarianism is

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71 While Hanf is considering the pejorative connotation of the term (Hanf, 1993, p. 11), Messarra is underlining its negativity in relation to the wrong employment of such term made by American political scientists (Messarra, 2003, p. 11).

72 Difficultly the literature on Lebanon of the sixties, while the political system was well functioning, defined Lebanon as the country of "sectarianism", meanwhile the focus was on the ideas of "confessionalism" or "consociationalism". The Chehab presidential term in late sixties has been by many analysts considered as the ages in which the state strongly contrasted the power in the hands of the communities. In such period none thought of labeling Lebanon as a sectarian state. For these reasons the term "sectarianism", applied to the institutional political system, represents a distortion.

73 We can try to change the titles of two well-known books from "sectarianism" to "communalism" or "confessionalism" and check then the perception that receives. The title of Hanna Ziadeh book is "Sectarianism and Inter-Communal Nation Building in Lebanon" and it was released in 2006, while sectarian clashes were predominant in Lebanon. The cover of the book is reproducing a man with the face painted with Leba-

also assuming a negative connotation, mostly denoting a field of violence and conflicts.[74] I suggest a distinction between an idea of confessionalism, that is strictly related to an institutional framework, and the concept of sectarianism that involves subjective feelings in a specific temporal context. Therefore sectarianism seems a consequence of confessionalism and means an evolution in the functionality of the system.

Another issue that is necessary to briefly discuss is the definition of the groups that compose Lebanon. In the period that marked the establishment of the Lebanese entity a special focus has been put on the term minority. The application of such term to the Lebanese case seems a direct consequence of the ages of the League of Nations, in which special emphasis was given to the concept of minority (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 76). The continuous employment of the expression "minorité confessionnel associé" by Michel Chiha, one of the drafter of the Lebanese Constitution, helped too understanding Lebanon as "the country of minorities".[75] Nowadays the tem minority seems instead misused for the Lebanese case, especially for the absence of a real majority within the country. It is also possible to underline that in current Lebanese dialect the term minority is difficultly used on a large scale and furthermore, when used, it does not make reference to the Lebanese confessional communities. At an institutional level, it is instead used to classify those groups that share

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nese colors. Ussama Makdisi's book, that is an extension of his doctoral thesis, is much softer, but it entails the idea I suggest. The title of the thesis is "Fantasies of the Possible: Colonialism and the Construction of Communalism in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon". The word sectarianism appeared just in the book and in the author's following articles.

74 Such connotation is highlighted by one of the definitions the Oxford English Dictionary is giving of the term sect: "a group with extreme or dangerous philosophical or political ideas".

75 The consideration of the Lebanese civil war, for example, as a conflict among minorities is well exemplified by McDowall. See, McDowall, D. (1983) *Lebanon: a Conflict of Minorities*. London: Minority Rights Group Publications.

one seat in the Parliament.[76] According to Rondot, "it could be used the term minority, but it needs a more specific connotation, cause of the deep implications this term is carrying on" (Rondot, 1947, p. 25).[77]
The field of institutional classification of the groups is instead strictly related to a religious language. The religious classification of Lebanese communities can also be understood from a linguistic perspective. One example is the use of the term *taif*, which is equated to the terms confession, sect or community, and that strictly refers to a religious field and to a sense of fragmentation, and it represents the most commonly used term in Lebanese daily life to refer to the socio-political communities. The normally accepted Arabic terms to define community are instead *gaalia* or *gamaaia*, but these terms are not used in current language with reference to the Lebanese communities.[78] The same logic follows the definition of the term *taifiyya* that could be translated to English with either the word sectarianism or confessionalism, without considering the literal meanings of the words, but rather highlighting the religious connotation that comes from the idea of sect or confession; two terms that essentially refer to a religious field (Crow, 1996, pp. 176-177)

The importance of such initial observations lies on the postulate that the only and necessary way to recognize and institutionalize the communities is through religious affiliation, and the representation in the system between Muslims and Christians (Salam, 1998; Picard, 2002; Makdisi,

76 The so-called minorities are represented by nine religious groups: Chaldean, Latin, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Assyrians, Armenian Protestant, Ismaili, Copts and Jews.

77 According to Rondot, "It is a community question, not of minorities, neither of their protection, because there are no minorities where there is no majority. It is necessary to speak about equilibrium between communities and on the basis of equality" (Rondot, 1947, p. 25).

78 Lara Deeb, with reference to the *hala al-Islamiyya* of the Southern suburbs of Beirut, notices that the term used to define the community is *giama*. (Deeb, 2006).

2000). Neither ethnic claims, nor identities based on different languages or territory, are taken into consideration. For example, Kurds are not recognized as an ethnic community, although they have a web of organizations and more than one political party working behind them; some Kurds are in fact included within the Sunni community while others hold no citizenship (Meho, 1995). Another example of the importance of religious affiliation comes by another ethnic group: the Armenians. It is possible to ascertain that in Lebanon the Armenian community is fragmented into three different sub-groups: Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants, where clearly the identification is a religious one (Picard, 2002, p. 64). Considering how the term "sect" is strictly related in its pejorative connotation to a clear-cut religious community and which bases of action are strictly religious, it looks that the better form to define the Lebanese groups is "communities", underlining the sociological community implicitly required by the confessional system, or "confessional community" (Picard, 2002), in order to fall closer to an institutional definition.

In order to make this study more comprehensive, we will use either the term community, either sect, confession, and confessional community. The use of the term minority in this dissertation will be applied only to describe a feeling of self-representation within a community, then in demographic terms and in terms of power, but not in order to define a Lebanese sociological community. Although it is difficult to label the Lebanese communities as minorities in its wide meaning, it is possible, in order to advance some comparisons with theories on minority rights in a liberal context, to consider the term minority as a wide general equivalent of community, or confessional community.

2. On Communities and the Political System

In public discourse, often in quite simplistic terms, the question arises

as to the number of recognized communities in Lebanon. People are often heard saying: "Lebanon is the country of the eighteen recognized communities"; "the Copts became the nineteenth recognized community"; "the Armenian Protestants have their own community" and ironically, "the nineteenth community will be the one of civil status". The great confusion around this subject is not of primary importance. But rather it highlights the insignificance of the amount of communities present in Lebanon. The majority of these very small sects, in fact, are represented in only one seat in parliament assigned to "minorities" with no influential political power.

On the other hand, scholars, politicians and intellectuals also tend to label Lebanon as the prototypical "refuge for minorities". Chiha is the progenitor of such thesis:

> "Le cas du Liban est unique au monde: un pays refuge par essence, parce que méditerranéen et au seuil de l'Asie, maritime et de montagne à la fois; un pays dont la population très diverse à ses sources est faite d'une longue suites d'hommes et des familles persécutés pour leurs convictions, pur leurs idées; une collection de communautés confessionnelles ayant chacune son statut personnel." (Chiha, 1964, p. 247).

In some exceptions there are political and demographical motivations that contradict such a statement. Many authors tried to dissipate this conception (Salibi, 1989, pp. 149-172) meanwhile others still use it (Picard, 2002, p. 13; Rondot, 1947, p. 5). It is possible to suggest that such idea has been probably conceived by the first Lebanese thinkers in order to shape a common national feeling that could unify such an heterogeneous society. On the other hand it is difficult nowadays to accept this theory for its real implication. For example the Palestinian community, that took refuge in Lebanon after the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948,

still lacks institutional recognition and it is victim of a regional political dispute.

Lebanon is composed of nineteen recognized communities[79] and a bunch of other not recognized, but in certain forms part of the political system.[80] The six major communities that since the birth of the Lebanese entity drafted the system are the Maronite, the Greek-Orthodox, the Shiite, the Sunni, the Druze and the Greek-Catholic.[81] The three major communities share the most important offices of the state: the Maronite the presidency, the Shiite the Speaker of the Parliament and the Sunni the Prime Minister. The other three main communities get certain defined places in the Cabinet or in other institutions. The Greek Orthodox holds for example the vice-presidency of the Chamber and that of the Prime ministry, and they contend with the Druze the presidency of a potential national Senate.[82] Greek Catholics also often hold specific offices in the Cabinet.

Article 95 of the Constitution, amended in the Taef agreement of

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79 There is always great confusion regarding the number of the Lebanese institutionalized communities. Many authors consider them in number of eighteen, while other seventeen or nineteen. It is possible here to advance that the Lebanese recognized communities are nineteen. Among various suggestions kept from different sources, I will take as reference the interview released by Marie Rose Zalzal to the Middle East Report in 1997. See: Zalzal, E. M. R. (1997). Secularism and Personal Status Codes in Lebanon: Interview with Marie Rose Zalzal. *Middle East Report*, No. 203, 37-39.

80 The Bahai community for example is not officially recognized in terms of institutional representation, but its followers compared in the electoral lists under the denomination of "Bahai".

81 The Shiite assumed formal recognition when they joined the administrative council at the beginning of nineteenth century.

82 The Lebanese Constitution revised in Taef establishes the creation of a Senate as strictly related to the process of deconfesionalization of the political system:
Article 22 of the Lebanese Constitution: Senate. With the election of the first Parliament on a national, non-confessional basis, a Senate is established in which all the religious communities are represented. Its authority is limited to major national issues.

1989, supposes, as provisional act before the abolition of confessionalism, that the high offices should be shared among the major communities, but it excludes such confessional repartition to public offices. The Governor of the Lebanese Central Bank is a Maronite and the Army commander is a Maronite too. Before the Taef Agreements such rule was valid for all public offices, and until Chehab presidency was also divided with a share of 6 to 5 in favor of the Christians. Chehab introduced the principle of strict parity in 1958 (Hanf, 1993, p. 95). While before the Taef Agreement the allocation of seats in the Parliament was with a ratio of 6 to 5 in favor of Christians, after Taef the ratio changed to 5 to 5, with 64 seats for Christian communities and 64 seats for Muslim communities.[83] The communities should also be represented in the Cabinet as the Constitution sanctions.

The communities, through article 9 and 10, enjoy of certain privileges facing the state. Article 9 allows communities to judge their members on issues concerning the personal status. Marriage, inheritance and filiation are the more important issues that concern family laws.[84] Article 10 is much more controversial, because it implicitly represents an attack to the shared memory of the national entity, leaving the possibility for the communities to have their own schools and education.[85]

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83 The actual repartition of the seats in Parliament is as follows:
Muslim communities' seats: Sunni 27, Shiite 27, Druze 8, Alawite 2
Christian communities' seats: Maronite 34, Greek Catholic 8, Greek Orthodox 14, Protestant 1, Armenian Orthodox 5, Armenian Catholic 1, Minorities 1

84 Article 9 of the Lebanese Constitution: Conscience, Belief.
There shall be absolute freedom of conscience. The state in rendering homage to the Most High shall respect all religions and creeds and guarantees, under its protection, the free exercise of all religious rites provided that public order is not disturbed. It also guarantees that the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect they belong, is respected.

85 Article 10 of the Lebanese Constitution: Education, Confessional Schools.
Education is free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not

The necessary factor that needs to be underlined here is the complete absence of state implication within such type of community affairs and the impossibility for the state to take decisions concerning the personal status of community's members. Most of the communities indeed have their own family law, emanated in different ages, and various institutions that allow them to legislate on these issues.[86]

From this brief overview on the prerogatives of the Lebanese communities, it seems clear that on one side, on a political level, the community is a necessary institutional intermediary for individuals in order to access state's institutions, and on the other side it represents a field of struggle to access to communal institutions and community power.

For these reasons it seems quite complicated to define a Lebanese community. Surely the Lebanese communities resembled more to the idea of *Gesellschaft* coined by Tonnies than that of *Gemeinschaft* (Tonnies, 1955, p. 17). According to Salibi,

> "les communautés religieuse au Liban étaient essentiellement des tribus, ou du moins se comportent comme telles; et le jeu qui finit par joue entre elles fut un jeu tribal. Ouvertement ce jeu était une compétition entre différents concepts de nationalité pour ce pays; en réalité il s'agissait surtout de rivalités et de jalousies entre les tribus" (Salibi, 1989, p. 65).

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interfere with the dignity of any of the religions or creeds. There shall be no violation of the right of religious communities to have their own schools provided they follow the general rules issued by the state regulating public instruction.

86 The Christian communities have been the first in 1951 to organize themselves and being recognized by the state. They have been then followed by the Sunni community in 1955, with its own juridical system grounded in the Hanafi law. Then they have been followed by the Druze in 1962, and then by the Shiite in 1967 with the juridical system based on the Jaafari law. On the personal status law of the Lebanese communities, see: El Gemayel, A. (1985). *The Lebanese Legal System*. Washington, D.C.: International Law Institute.

While Chiha is considering the Lebanese communities as "une forme de civilisation" (Chiha, 1964, p. 303), Picard affirms that "a community is more than an allegiance to a shared faith. It is a social, political and even economic structure" (Picard, 2002, p. 9). It is possible to add to Picard's definition the idea that such structure englobes various clusters that are at the base of the Lebanese system. Such segments will be analyzed in the following paragraphs.

3. Approaches and Interpretations of the system

The study of the Lebanese Republic always interlaced with the study of its peculiar system, permitting some authors also to question if Lebanon is a multi-communal state or just a system (Harb, 2005). The approaches to the Lebanese political system have been always very different but with a similar logic in their structure, which recalled the idea of confessionalism, often called sectarianism or communalism, and the idea of consociationalism. According to this perspective, each community strives to establish zones of influences for itself and carves out an increasingly large share of the *gateau*, (Beydoun, 2003, p. 75). The implicit result of this practice is the consequent weakness of the state, that resembles more to a gathering of multiple communities than to a nation-state.

It is necessary to shed light on some articles of the Constitution to better underline the system of power within the Lebanese entity and how the system helps elites to maintain their power. Such considerations serve to highlight clear that the Constitution is not an untouchable body, but it is often questioned, creating controversies and different interpretations.

It is possible to divide the articles of the Constitution that reflect the confessional system on two basis: the first concerning the prerogatives of the communities, and the second regulating the multi-communal system and the coexistence between the different groups. Article 9 and 10, previ-

ously mentioned, concern specifically communities' prerogatives. Article 95, that is controversially called "On the Abolition of Political Confessionalism" and that was amended in the Taef Agreement, affirms the necessary representation of all confessional groups "in a just and equitable fashion in the formation of the Cabinet", and the abolition of confessional quota allocation of public offices, excluding Grade One posts.[87]

The amended Constitution gave great importance to the Cabinet presided by the Prime Minister in representing the whole spectrum of Lebanese communities. The Cabinet, or Council of Ministers is also at the attention of article 65, which affirms that:

> "The legal quorum for a Council meeting is a majority of two thirds of its members. It makes its decisions by consensus. If that is not possible, it makes

87 Article 95 of the Lebanese Constitution: On the Abolition of Political Confessionalism - National Committee.
(1) The first Chamber or Deputies which is elected on the basis of equality between Muslims and Christians takes the appropriate measures to realize the abolition of political confessionalism according to a transitional plan. A National Committee is to be formed, headed by the President of the Republic, including, in addition to the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the Prime Minister, leading political, intellectual, and social figures.
(2) The tasks of this Committee are to study and propose the means to ensure the abolition of confessionalism, propose them to the Chamber of Deputies and the Ministers, and supervise the execution of the transitional plan.
(3) During the transitional phase:
a. The confessional groups are to be represented in a just and equitable fashion in the formation of the Cabinet.
b. The principle of confessional representation in public service jobs, in the judiciary, in the military and security institutions, and in public and mixed agencies are to be cancelled in accordance with the requirements of national reconciliation; they shall be replaced by the principle of expertise and competence. However, Grade One posts and their equivalents are exempt from this rule, and the posts must be distributed equally between Christians and Muslims without reserving any particular job for any confessional group but rather applying the principles of expertise and competence.

> its decisions by vote of the majority of attending members. Basic national issues require the approval of two thirds of the members of the Council named in the Decree forming the Cabinet."[88]

According to Hanf,

> "Whereas the Constitution reflects the spirit of Jacobinism, and permits pure majority rule under a majority vote system, the combination of Constitution, Electoral Law, and National Pact plainly made of Lebanon a consociation. The country is never governed by a simple majority, always by a grand coalition; in effect every large community has a right of veto" (Hanf, 1993, p. 73).

But the articles of the Constitution represent also a field of controversy, as we have seen analyzing the events occurred in Lebanon in the last three years. Hanf raised two important issues: the country governed by a simple majority and veto's power for the main communities. Both these issues have been the focus of the main institutional debate in the time taken here into consideration. On one side it underlines how the debate within the country has been touching basic pillars of the political system. On the other side, such focus sheds light on the country's blurring rules of the game, not always accepted by all the actors, and with most of the actors giving a personal opportunistic interpretation of the Constitution. Therefore it is important to underline that the game is often played outside the

88 The Basic national issues, quoted in the Constitution at Article 65 coma 5, are considered the following:
The amendment of the constitution, the declaration of a state of emergency and its termination, war and peace, general mobilization, international agreements and treaties, the annual government budget, comprehensive and long-term development projects, the appointment of Grade One government employees and their equivalents, the review of the administrative map, the dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies, electoral laws, nationality laws, personal status laws, and the dismissal of Ministers.

legal framework of the Constitution.[89] Such behaviour of the main actors was exemplified by the discussion on the election of the President of the Republic in 2007, basically with the option of the election of a President through a two-third majority or through a simple majority.[90]

The Constitution did not provide many of the issues concerning the confessional system and in particular with the share of the political quotas for each confessional community, that has been left to the electoral law. Article 24 of the Constitution concerns the electoral law and affirms the equal representation of Christian and Muslim communities, and it is instead vague in the definition of the proportional representation of each confession and on the geographical repartition of seats.[91] We can advance that this gap in the constitutional text helps the continuous reshaping of the confessional system and power's repartition.

From the blind following of the Constitution it seems that the Leba-

89 It is necessary to underline the existence of a Constitutional Council, not working nowadays. See: Ghaddar, H. (2007, October 11). What on earth happened to Lebanon's supreme court? http://www.nowlebanon.com/. Accessed October 11, 2007.

90 The government's majority used to "threat" the opposition with the employment of a simple majority vote to elect the President of the Republic. The opposition, in name of consensus, strongly opposed such possibility, advoking for a necessary two-third majority.

Article 49 of the Lebanese Constitution: Presidential Powers.

(2) The President of the Republic shall be elected by secret ballot and by a two-thirds majority of the Chamber of Deputies. After a first ballot, an absolute majority shall be sufficient.

91 Article 24 of the Lebanese Constitution: Electoral Laws.

(1) The Chamber of Deputies is composed of elected members; their number and the method of their election is determined by the electoral laws in effect. Until such time as the Chamber enacts new electoral laws on a non-confessional basis, the distribution of seats is according to the following principles:

a. Equal representation between Christians and Muslims.

b. Proportional representation among the confessional groups within each religious community.

c. Proportional representation among geographic regions.

nese entity is ruled by a consociational system, where most of the conditions for a successful consociation and a conflict regulation proposed by Lijphart and Nordinger are reached (Hudson, 1968, p. 221).[92] Such consociational system would avoid dynamics of majority versus minority in the name of consensus. According to Messarra, "le système consensuel de gouvernement n'est pas un régime politique, ni synonyme de confessionnalisme, mais une classification et une méthode d'analyse" (Messarra, 2003, p. 33). Hanf is considering that the consociational system is the cause of freedom and democracy, and that makes authoritarian solution impossible (Hanf, 1993, p. 558). At the same time Lijphart gives a special focus on the elites in terms of stability of the system saying that:

> "Distinct lines of cleavage among the subcultures are also conducive to consociational democracy because they are likely to be concomitant with a high degree of internal political cohesion of the subcultures. This is vital to the success of consociational democracy. The elites have to cooperate and compromise with each other without losing the allegiance and support of their own rank and file" (Lijphart, 1969, p. 221).

Hudson also affirms that "conditions for successful consociationalism include the following: cohesion of communal elites, the ability of those elites to lead their respective "flocks", and the ability of communal elites to get along with each other" (Hudson, 1999, p. 96). Two factors that characterize the consensual system need to be analyzed in depth: its functionality at the community level and the role of the elites.

The main focus of the consociational system seems based on elites'

92 The main theorist of the consociational system is Arend Lijphart. As was underlined by Hudson, Lijphart lists six conditions for a successful consociational democracy: 1. Distinct lines of cleavage 2. Multiple balance of power 3. Popular attitudes toward a grand coalition 4. An external threat 5. Moderate nationalism 6. Relatively low total load on the system (Hudson, 1968).

good relations among them and on the capacity of the elites to control their "masses" in order to gain power on a national level. Elites' predominant role as the main shapers of the confessional system has been also underlined by Ofeish:

> "Sectarianism could be initially identified here as an elite-promoted mode of differentiation among religiously affiliated members of the society in terms of access to power and control over resources...Lebanon's elite in general are interested in sectarianism because it is a useful tool for control" (Ofeish, 1999).

A critical stance on the confessional system is that of Corm, who defines the confessional system as a totalitarian system that invades the whole public sphere and where the various leaders exerts a sort of dictatorial rule within their own community.[93]

The remarks of these authors open the space for some empirical questions, due to the importance given to the role of the elites and implicitly affirmed by consociational theory. Is the individual informally excluded from direct involvement in the political process? If on a national level authoritarian forms difficultly will show up, could they appear on a community level? Is the system better functioning with homogeneous communities? Is the consociational system promoting homogeneity within the community?

The role of leaders and elites will be analyzed in the next paragraph, following an analysis of the multiple clusters that intermediate, beside or in connection with the community, between the individual and the state.

It is possible to highlight that in the confessional system rights and identities are guaranteed. On one side the rights for the communities to

93 Corm, G. (2005, December 27). Le système communautaire et confessionnel s'apparente au totalitarisme. *L'Humanité*.

enjoy of their personal status for their members, and a representation in the national Parliament through the political quota. On the other side the identity is also guarantee by institutional recognition. What it look less clear is the focus that moves the communities to struggle in order to achieve more power, related to the self perception of justice that each community presents, and about the distribution of power and wealth (Hanf, 1993, p. 32). Such issue represents an open channel of confrontation within the Lebanese confessional system, and need to be taken into consideration. It is possible to suggest that such struggle for power assumes the identity of the so-called sectarianism.

Kiwan is proposing a lecture of the trinomials consociationalism, confessionalism and sectarianism as respectively a system, a board practice and the conflictive step after confessionalism.[94] I will propose a similar approach to the interpretation of the Lebanese system. On a first level it is possible to say that confessionalism and consociationalism are coexisting as both part of the political system, the first defining its structure, the institutions and the basis to define the individuals, while the second is concerning the relation and dynamics among communities in terms of power-sharing. Lack of consensus and weakness in state institutions open the space for sectarianism, that represents an evolution of confessionalism and where the focus is mainly on the struggle for power and repartition of wealth, as it is the case of the vacuum in one of the major offices. Sectarianism represents the evolution of the confessional system out of the institutional field, in the way that, in time of vacuum in state powerful offices or in times of system's reshaping, communal leaders use their communal power to show their strength in the national sphere and in order to achieve more power in the repartition of the state *gâteau*. We will intend

94 Kiwan's lecture at the American University of Beirut Lebanon's "Consociational" Democracy: Theory and Practice. In the framework of the seminar on "The Challenges of Development and Democracy in Lebanon"; April 13, 2007.

in this study the term sectarianism as an evolution of the system, but in order not to create confusion among the readers not used to Lebanese social and political issues, we will accept the different perceptions offered by other authors that especially use it as synonymous of confessionalism.

Finally, the confessional system assumes that Lebanon enjoys of heterogeneity and diversity, it creates multiple clusters of political communities putting the community as institutional intermediary between the individual and the state. Furthermore, the consociational system advantages the role of the communal elites on a horizontal level in the national sphere, and on a vertical level in the relation between them and communities' members. It is necessary to analyze now such community's clusters and the various segments of the system, which represent the multiple intermediaries between the individual and the state.

C. Communities' Clusters and Segments of the System

1. Elites and Intermediaries

It was mentioned above the role that institutionally is reserved to the community: to function as an intermediary between the individual and the state. The individual is recognized through the belonging to one of the communities and out of this framework it has no real existence in terms of political rights. At the same time community affiliation is informally vehicular for the individual to get an official position in Lebanese political life, and formally until not long time ago, to get job in a public office. Such consideration pushes some authors debating the Lebanese multi-communal system to consider the communities and their political organs, in contrast with homogeneous states, as the most important intermediaries to access to desirable positions within the system (Hanf,

1993, p. 32; Picard, 2002, p. 170).[95]

The other point to underline here concerns the theories of the consociational system. Lebanon as a consociational system is almost accepted by theorist of political science dealing with the abstract Lebanon. One of the reasons of existence and functioning of the consociational system is the importance of the elites. Basic pillar of the theories of the consociational system is the presence of heterogeneous communities and powerful elites. The elites in pre-war Lebanon were basically composed of notables, local authorities and feudal leaders. A new elites emerged after the civil war, but it did not change the situation. The new actors that achieved a place in the political spectrum, soon assumed the role and the practices of the previous elites. The new elites that emerged were basically from the ranks of those militias that were able to increase their social and economic power, and among the "entrepreneurs of the concrete", able to make fast money abroad during the war (Corm, 2005, pp. 238-239).

The Independence Uprising of 2005 also represented a further increase in the role of the elites in the Lebanese system, or if it possible to say, a turn back to the situation of 1990. Michel Aoun, the former General of the Army and controversial Prime Minister during the last years of the war, came back from his Paris exile in May of 2005 and since that moment started ruling a large faction of Lebanese Christians behind a curtain of popular-nationalism, but with a strong communal background struggling to represent the Christian in Lebanon. Samir Geagea, the former leader of the Lebanese Forces militia after the assassination of Bashir Gemayel in 1982, was the only militia leader convicted after the war, but more for an internal disagreement with the Syrian arbiter than for other reasons. He was released in July 2005 through an amnesty law and since that he struggled to represent Christians on the side of the

95 Picard considers that communalism replace citizenship with clientelism as intermediary between state and society.

14th of March bloc. Amine Gemayel represents the third main pole of the Christian community. Former President of the Republic in 1982, after his brother's assassination, and "grew up" by Kataeb founder Pierre Gemayel, he came back to Lebanon in 2000 and after the "Cedar Revolution" and his son's assassination in 2006, took an important position in terms of national influence. Another militia leader that made a political and economical fortune during the war was Nabih Berry, a Cabinet minister from 1989 to 1992, he then occupied the office of Speaker of the Parliament. In 2005, after thirteen years in charge, he was elected again as Speaker of the Parliament with 126 votes on 128. The third leader that represents the power of militia leader constructed during the war and their absorption to the politics of the country after several amnesty law is Walid Jumblatt. The Jumblatt is a centenary family from Mount Lebanon that until now managed to rule the Druze community and delegates important offices to its members. Sleiman Frangiè, Chamaoun, Raymond Eddè, Michel Pharaon, Michel Murr, Elias Murr, all represent important actors that marked Lebanese history and the actual debate within the country, especially as representatives of traditional families that use to transmit their power on patrilineal line. Such a practice, that implies political leadership, was undertaken also by the Hariri family at the time of Rafik assassination. The son Saad "achieved" the leadership of the Future Movement and indirectly of a big portion of the Lebanese Sunni in 2005. Nasrallah represents another kind of leader that was "Lebanonized". The assassination of former Secretary General Abbas al-Musawi by an Israeli rocket in 1992 pushed Hassan Nasrallah to the leadership of the Hezbollah movement. While before 1992 the office of Secretary General of the Islamic movement was characterized by a mandate of two years, after that episode it has been continuously extended.

This panorama shows on one side the predominant role of the elites in Lebanon and the importance of a leadership for a community, while

on the other side exemplifies the persistence of the usual political representation. In such conditions, the Lebanese state resemble more to a recollection of communal leaders than a recollection of representatives figures concerned with the policy of the state. According to Hudson, writing on Lebanon in 1969, "Lebanon is a democracy, but it is also an oligarchy", where "an elite cartel representing the various communities runs the country" (Hudson, 1969, p. 6 and p. 96). As leaders of the various communities, they represent the ideal peak of the pyramid of political intermediation for the individuals in the national public sphere. It is however necessary to underline that communities and membership to one of these leaders are not these clear-cut entities, but instead other relations are working on the base of tradition, allegiance and interests, working on a local level or through other branches. These other intermediary clusters, that work behind the leaders and that do not enjoy of strong visibility at the national level, seem fundamental in order to understand the Lebanese system.

2. Intermediary Clusters: Family, Clientelism and Informal Social Practices

It has been normally considered that Lebanese diaspora amounts around nine million persons, while others esteem too that Lebanese diaspora is composed of more than thirteen million people. Everyone in Lebanon has at least some relatives living abroad, in Syria, in Iran, in South America, in Europe, in the United States, in Australia. On the web it is possible to find virtual communities and forums of Lebanese abroad of second or third generation that exchange information on the possible family belonging. The web also provides with the history of notorious people from different families and connect users with the same family roots. This is not to underline the strong link between the diaspora and Lebanese abroad, that sure it is, but to shed light on the prominent role of

the extended family in Lebanon, as in many other Mediterranean countries.[96] The members of the extended family abroad is due to send money to Lebanese living within the borders of the country, to keep the name of the family high and to financially help when it is necessary. Sunday is usually dedicated in Lebanon to the extended family, a gathering of first, second and third cousins. Family name represents a source of information on the interlocutor in daily Lebanese life, either in order to supply to a direct question on the location of provenience, either to try to understand the community of belonging. But family names are not a clear-cut and they mingle in different communities. Family in Lebanese society is synonymous for reliability. Family is important for *wasta*, connection, in order to have access to certain jobs and avoid problems in difficult situations, especially while dealing with state institutions or its representatives. Extended family, as in most Mediterranean countries, provides new blood-link generations to get a job. The Lebanese culture is characterized by strong familial identities that are more than an institution and have an economic significance (Picard, 2002, p. 49; Hanf, 1993, pp. 80-81, Barakat, 1985, pp. 28-30). In many cases it is also possible to hear of real myth of foundations for the same families that goes back of centuries.[97] According to Chevallier, in his study of last century Mount Lebanon:

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96 On the role of the extended family in the Arab world, see: Barakat, H. (1985). Arab Family and the Challenge of Social Transformation. In *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voices of Change*, edited by E. W. Fernea. Austin: University of Texas Press, pp 27-48.

97 "The author of the theory of Ghassanides is Theodor Noldke. And I am the first to carry this name in modern history, my father wanted so. We remain Christian after the Islamic conquest of Syria. Our capital was Bosra and when there was the Muslim invasion we became the allies of Muslims against Byzantium. They were the lords and we were the vassals. Maybe it is a legend, but we are thought to have let our national feelings as Arabs reveal over our religious feelings" Author's interview with Ghassan Tueni, September 7, 2007.

> "le group familial, la "maison", forme donc l'unité sociale de base, et son organisation agit sur tout les structures qui lui sont supérieures, aussi bien dans la communauté maronite que dans la communauté druze. Cette formation familiale trouve son assise territoriale dans le village, qui comprend au moins une autre formation familiale semblable. Le village constitue donc un ensemble élaboré" (Chevalier, 1971, p. 26).

Chevallier is directly sanctioning the village, in terms of physical space, as one of the main links between the community and the family. The link between the extended family and the community is extremely strong and the family represents one of its main intermediary clusters. The same community, with the main prerogative sanctioned by the political system of managing its own family law, makes of the family its principal segment of reference. The relation between the political system, the community and the family appears so as quite strict. The practice of endogamy, still present but in a low average respect to the past, either in a family either in a community helps the links between families and makes stronger its power within a community. The electoral law, that will be analyzed later in this chapter, still requires people to go back to the native village in order to vote. Such conditions tend to empower family role within the society. The different families are not competing with the community as social actors, but are entrenched (Hanf, 1993, p. 80). Families like Jumblatt and Arslan, actually the most popular families within the Druze communities, had a history of inter-marriage. Frangieh, Gemayel, Jumblatt, Arslan, Eddè, Asaad, Zein,...are only few of the families names that studying Lebanese history is possible to run into. Before the creation of the Lebanese entity already these families were living, and ruling, within these borders. In certain cases it is also possible to relate them to a specific community. The family represents an important institution that also

politicians in their actions or stands have to take into consideration.[98] The representative of a family or one of the heads of a powerful extended family, that is also a political-broker, is commonly know as the *za'im* (plural *zu'ama*), a notable or a patron. Arnold Hottinger is giving a clear definition of what is a *za'im*:

> "A *za'im* in the specifically Lebanese and contemporary terms is a political leader who possesses the support of a locally circumscribed community and who retains this support by fostering or appearing to foster the interests of as many as possible from amongst his clientele. The *zaim* usually belongs to a family outstanding through its fortune. His position of leadership is frequently passed on to some of his descendants. Finally, the *zaim* is not a purely political leader nor is he simply a successful business operator...He instead combines the two functions in one person and tends to mix them intimately. He exchanges the betterment of his client group in all ways, economic, social, and political, for their political support" (Hottinger, 1966, p. 85).

Family, community, clientele, hereditary and political-economic strength: here are all the factors of this predominant intermediary cluster that connect the individual and the state.[99] Although the realm of the *zu'ama* was especially the times of pre-war Lebanon (Hanf, 1993, p. 79), today the "job" of *za'im* did not change so much and the actors are dressing modern clothes while keeping the role of intermediary.[100] *Zu'ama* are

98 "I wanted to present my candidature in the election of 1992 and compete against Michel Murr for the seat in the Metn region, but after extreme pressure from my family members I had to quit my candidature". Author's interview with Dimitri Bitar, August 15, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

99 According to Picard "political clientelism is an heritage of the mediating role of Middle Eastern tax collectors and warlords up to mid-nineteenth century" (Picard, 2002, p. 50).

100 On the concept of *zu'ama* in modern terms, see: Nammour, J. (2007). Une brève histoire de zouama... *L'avenir en points d'interrogation. Supplément de L'Orient- Le Jour*

also, nowadays like in the past, the tools for clientelism and patronage, or of the practice of *do ut des*. The aid is implicitly compensated by the support of the family in time of elections, for demonstrations or, in an extreme case, for fighting. The Saturday morning Jumblatt open-air happening is a clear and almost public example of such broad practice. Many other leaders perform the same practice. Amin Gemayel's house in Bikfaya, the day of Metn by-elections in 2007 was a stroll of people coming to show their personal support for the leader, and not just members of the community or related ones, but also broad political allies.

It is difficult to say that these practices are touching all the Lebanese, but on one side or the other, family helps or *zu'ama* support, are large broad practices still working in Lebanon. Extended family, clientelism and patronage are a strong reality of the Lebanese scenario. Family is indeed a society in miniature (Barakat, 1985, p. 46). The connection between the communal system and the family, behind the tool of the family law, sheds light on the importance of the family within the Lebanese political system and explains its strong influence on the Lebanese society. As we will analyze later, the family in the relation to family law means also gender discrimination, particularly in such areas as marriage, divorce and inheritance (Barakat, 1985, p. 32).

3. Political Parties and Religious Actors

The political parties represent other type of clusters that in most of the cases are strictly related to extended families and communities. On one side, the parties are simply a cover or the extension of a family that through historical legacy were able to gather around them a lot of people. At the beginning of their existence, even if with a predominant average of member of a defined community, political parties were definitely more

paru le lundi 26 mars 2007, 120-121.

inter-confessional, and it was possible to find party's members belonging from different communities, but due to the situation of tension, conflict and war among communities, they developed the tendency to transform into informal confessional parties.

Nowadays the majority of the political parties are, although not clearly declared, confessional parties, in a way that they mostly recollect members of a community and they don't present a clear ideology, but they are based on the power of the leadership. Leadership represents often the ideology of the party. It is impossible to define it as a clear-cut, and it is not possible to say that the Lebanese parties are 100% confessional, but it is possible to suggest that the remaining small percentage of people belonging to a different confession are following the party for historical tradition, place of residence or good relations. It is necessary also to say that, due to the current electoral system, the leaders need to shape lists with member from different communities, facilitating the cooptation of members of other communities.

A brief overview of the Lebanese parties easily exemplifies these patterns. The Kataeb, the first political party in Lebanon, even if at the beginning with a little Muslim average, is now strictly related to Christian interests. The same is possible to say for the Lebanese forces, former military wing of the Kataeb, that due to the leadership of Samir Geagea is also taking a geographical connotation and bases its force in the town of Bcharré, in Northern Lebanon. Michel Aoun's claims for national agenda are often denied by the feelings that show in his interviews as representing the Christians of Lebanon. The Progressive Socialist Party as well as the Democratic Lebanese Party, respectively belonging from Jumblatt and Arslan, are specifically gathering a Druze audience. The Shiite parties, Amal and Hezbollah, both have been established to help the "downtrodden" Lebanese Shiites, and, especially the latter, have a clear-cut Shiite membership. In the case of Hezbollah it is almost impos-

sible to find members from other communities. The Future Movement of Saad Hariri, that inherited from his father Rafik, is mostly Sunni even if leave space for members of different communities, due to the policy of patronage developed by the father before his assassination. Also it seems difficult to find in the three Armenian parties some members belonging from other communities.[101]

Various secular parties are also present in the Lebanese scenario, with an inter-confessional membership. What seems interesting is that also these parties have predominant community memberships. The Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) is mostly Greek Orthodox, due maybe to the fact that its founder, Antoun Saadeh was an Orthodox. The Lebanese Communist Party gathered almost members of the Shiite, Druze and Greek Orthodox community. In geographical terms, non-confessional parties also have strongholds, like for example Dour el Chueir for the SSNP. Such conditions make them as part of the system, considering their power as related to a family or a territory. It means indeed that it is not strictly related to an ideology, but they are mostly based on a modern patron-client relationship. The notables access public offices through non-confessional parties and the clients follow the notables in order to have access to the state.

Another typology of political parties are those ones that even if linked to a specific community, they have a more geographical and family connotation. It is the case of *Tayyar al Marada* belonging to the Frangieh family, the Nationalist Liberal Party of the Chamoun family and the National Bloc of the Eddé family. All these parties have a strict Christian connotation, but the cleavage is that of traditional-regional families. Other examples are those of a one-man party without party, like Michel Murr, that is basing his power on the local support in his stronghold in

101 The three Lebanese Armenian parties are the Ramgavar Party, the Tashnag Party and the Hunchak Party.

the Metn region.

Most of the high/middle rank representatives of these parties are other clusters of intermediation, but it is possible to say after preliminary observations, that they are strictly succubus to the political line of the leadership, that normally is residing in one person or in one family. Most of these families or political parties had historically strong contact with foreign powers or protectors, following the legacy of the French capitulations.[102] For this reason the Sunnis are closed to Saudi Arabia, the Maronites to France, the Orthodox divided between Greece and Russia, the Shiites to Iran, and the Druzes too often relied in the past on the British.

Religious institutions and figures are not immune from such habit. It is the case of the Maronite and the influence that the Vatican has on them. Religious figures enter the political arena in two ways. On one side through the support of a faction over the other within the community, and on the other side with the support of one of the two opposite political blocs that usually characterize the national sphere. Religious figures mean legitimacy toward a national audience and also intermediaries for an international audience. We will better analyze their role while analyzing the three selected communities. Religious figures, sometimes with a more moderate approach, sometimes with clear statements, often enter the political sphere or in the struggle among the communities.[103] During the debate over the election of the Maronite President of the Republic the most influential actors have been Saad Hariri, the Sunni leader of the Future Movement, Nabih Berry the Shiite Speaker of the Parliament, and Patriarch Sfeir as representative of Maronite, due also to the fact that the

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102 The issue that concerns foreign involvement is by many authors considered as the main cause of the internal strife. One of the main detractors of such thesis is Ghassan Tueni. See, Tueni, G. (2004). *Une guerre pour les autres*. Paris : édition JCLattés. (Original work published 1985).

103 It is the case of sheikh Afif Nabolsi's fatwa. See appendix VI and VII.

Maronite community was deeply divided into two main different positions. In a more fragmented community, the different positions can also choose to find legitimacy through different religious figures.[104] Religious figures, although not real intermediaries between the individual and the state in terms of access to offices or public positions, represent a tool used by national actors in terms of legitimacy and power.

4. The Electoral Law: at the Base of the System?

In the previous paragraph we mentioned that people in Lebanon have to vote in their native village. This institutional law is followed by a wide social practice. As usual, the day of the elections, mini-buses are arranged by patrons in the native village, who gather their voters all around Lebanon to bring them to their respective hometowns. In certain cases they are ready to fill the tank of their cars or to pay extra money.[105] Payment of militants or community members in order to convince them to vote for their patron is a common practice, not just in elections time. According to streets' rumors, the people camping in both "opposition" tent camps in Downtown Beirut respectively in 2005 and 2006-07 were well-paid by politicians to stay there. The same rumors concern the huge rallies that took place in Lebanon in these last three years. The panorama at the poll is not better in terms of democratic practices. Even if after Syrian's withdrawal it seems that freedom of vote developed, the polls still are besieged by members of the opposite factions with flags and uniforms.[106]

104 It is the case of the Druze community. The election of the new sheikh *al-aql* found the community deeply divided on two lines equivalent to the two major factions: Jumblatt and Arslan. Arslan contested the sheikh *al-aql* elected and he elected a second sheiikh *al-aql*.

105 Such claim is coming from a personal observation during the electoral process.

106 Azzi, I. (2007, August 6). LADE sees only a few 'disturbing' violations in by-elections. *The Daily Star*.

The electoral process is definitely the realm of patronage and clientelism, and the place where most evidently the work of the political actors is displayed. The relation and the patron-clients dynamics are not only vertical, between leaders and masses. The dynamics are also horizontal, not in a patron client dynamic, but between leaders from different factions, through dealings and compromises in the days before the elections, an even more scarier situation, cause implicitly leaving out independent figures, transforming the population into subjects and forging the electoral process that becomes just a referendum. The electoral process in the aftermath of *Intifada al Istiqlal* in 2005 well exemplifies these practices. The "opposition", now 14th of March bloc, with a strong anti-Syrian rhetoric during all the "revolutionary" process, decided to shape a four-party alliance composed of Walid Jumblatt Progressive Socialist Party, Saad Hariri Future Movement and the Shiite parties Hezbollah and Amal. The alliance prevented other actors from challenging them in the common lists they proposed in specific areas. Furthermore, political deals show up on the level of candidates between different factions or through gentlemen's favors. It is the case for example of the election of Pierre Gemayel, understood by many as a favor Aoun made to Amine Gemayel not presenting a fourth Maronite candidate from his bloc in Bikfaya, Gemayel's stronghold.

On the other side, the complexity of the electoral system makes it more an issue for mathematicians than for political scientists. Understanding the Lebanese electoral system is quite a hard adventure, and its complexity resides in a geographical-confessional repartition of the seats elected on majority system. The basic pillars of the Lebanese electoral law are mentioned in Article 24 of the Constitution. The article is mainly sanctioning equality of representation between Christians and Muslims, and a proportional representation on the double level of confession and

geography.[107]

Lebanon is divided into six regional governorates (*mohafazat*) and divided on districts level (*qaza*) where seats are allocated, due to demographical presence, to the different communities. Furthermore, the electoral process is not proposing a strict communal election, in a way that the members of the communities choose their own representatives, but it is working more on the idea of mixed lists proposed by national leaders through alliances with members of other communities. Such latter practice has been introduced in order to lown down the level of strict sectarianism the system provides, but which side effects is represented by the board gerrymandering practice.

The electoral system is nowadays based on the 2000 electoral law, introduced by the Syrians during their presence in Lebanon in agreement with a large part of Lebanese politicians but with the exclusion of the Christians, that interpreted such electoral law as the basis of their decadence.[108] On the dawn of the 2005 electoral process it was taken into consideration the possibility to change the electoral law, that is mostly targeting the Christian electorate, but it was decided to postpone it. The results were obnoxious and reflected continuity with the precedent Syrian

107 Article 24 of the Lebanese Constitution: Electoral Laws.
(1) The Chamber of Deputies is composed of elected members; their number and the method of their election is determined by the electoral laws in effect. Until such time as the Chamber enacts new electoral laws on a non-confessional basis, the distribution of seats is according to the following principles:
a. Equal representation between Christians and Muslims.
b. Proportional representation among the confessional groups within each religious community.
c. Proportional representation among geographic regions.

108 Many consider that the 2000 electoral law helps the implementation of the practice of gerrymandering, and considered it as an attempt by Syria to guarantee its allies the control of the Parliament. With such majority electoral system who gets the highest votes wins all the seats

occupation: unusual alliances between opposite blocs, uncontested seats assigned without voting and low average of participation in the electoral process. Many external observers could remain astonished by such results considering them as a direct consequence of a "revolutionary" process that probably gathered half of the country in Beirut.[109]

After the formation of Fouad Siniora's Cabinet in July 2005, the government established the independent Boutros Commission, from the name of the former Foreign Affairs and Emigrant Minister, the Greek-Orthodox Fuad Boutros, in order to propose a draft for a new electoral law.[110] The main debate around the electoral process concerns the idea that the confessional system is implicitly helping the institutionalization of clientelism (Picard, 2002, pp. 51-52). What seems clear is that the electoral process is definitely working against political parties, helping instead the representation of communal candidates (Hanf, 1993, p. 77). The Boutros commission worked on these issues introducing a mixed system with proportional and majority representation. A brief look at the proposed draft that was presented in June 2006 but that was never discussed due to the following summer war, can give a glance of the implicit "inconveniences" of the system.[111] The main targets of the draft law are the patron-client practices, the communal representation, and the barrier

109 The average of people voting in Beirut district in the aftermath of the Independence Uprising was 19%. See: El-Ghoul, A. (2005, May 30). First round of voting exposes Hariri's weakness. *The Daily Star*.

110 For the full text of the 129 articles of the proposed draft of the new electoral law see: NowLebanon (January 11, 2008). Parliamentary Electoral Draft Law Submitted to His Excellency Prime Minister Mr. Fouad Siniora. National Commission on the Parliamentary Electoral Law. NowLebanon.com.

111 For a glance on the reform campaign of the electoral law, see: http://www.ccer-lebanon.org/. Accessed February 12, 2008. It seems important to underline the fact that even if the commission has been labeled as "independent" the 12 members of the commission followed confessional lines. Six of them were Christians and the other six Muslims.

that the actual electoral system creates to new or independent candidates, as those non-confessional parties that are not strictly related to a defined community. The draft proposed a regulation of the media, to lower the age for voting to 18 years old,[112] a quota for women and the possibility to vote in the place of residence.

Many authors consider that the electoral system is on one side promoting tolerance between communities, and on the other side is pushing the electoral battle within the community and not between them (Hanf, 1993, p. 82; Salam, 2003, p. 148; Hudson, 1999, pp. 212-219). But what these authors also underline is the great power in the hands of communal leaders, notables and elites that through a process of cooperation among them, tend to exclude new actors from accessing the system and the political game. Due to the same system, most of the communities do not really elect their own representatives, and it is especially the case of the Christians in post-war Lebanon.[113] So, in a confessional system, where individuals are recognized as with a primary communal identity, is it acceptable that they cannot directly elect their communal representatives? It looks like a paradox. On one side, an individual with a national approach can difficultly find a proper candidate because the same institutions implicitly block such possibility. On the other side an individual with a community approach has to rely on leaders of other communities through their national creation of mixed lists. These issues seem to underline the incongruence of the electoral system. According to El-Khazen,

112 The actual electoral law confirms that the minimum age to vote is 21.

113 Talking to Arda Ekmekji (2008, January 18). http://nowlebanon.com/: "In the past years there were many complaints that the Christian candidates were being elected by Muslims. In other words, if you take the areas of the South, since there are no Christians there in big numbers, any Christian candidate would be a Hezbollah candidate, for example. Or if you take someone in the North, in Tripoli, or in Beirut and so forth. People were a bit upset about this". Arda Ekmenji has been member of the Boutos Commission. Accessed January 18, 2008.

> "Elections since war ended have been largely detached from the political process and have helped institutionalize the status quo since 1990; instability and changing in the electoral law increased dependency on the makers" (El-Khazen, 2003, p. 64).

Therefore the electoral law represents one of the basic segments of the system, and it seems for this same reason that a tough debate has been focusing on its reform. The electoral process is giving the semblance of a democratic run, but the electoral law implicitly precludes the candidatures of new actors. Such practices put the individual in a position not of a citizen with right to vote, but of a subject with right to follow what has been already decided for him on a higher level. Indeed the other main reason that influenced the failure in the implementation of the new electoral law is represented by the fear of many actual lawmakers to lose their seat.[114]

D. The Lebanese Individual: A National but Communal Citizen

1. Essay on Lebanese Individualism

> "Considered in its totality, Lebanon appears as a society in transition dominated by a very intense individualism and by a communitarianism of religious origin" (IRFED Plan for Lebanon of 1961, Rabbath, 1986, p. 96).

114 Talking to Arda Ekmekji (2008, January 18). http://nowlebanon.com/: "Let me tell you now that everyone who is in parliament today is not happy with the Boutros law because they feel they are threatened by it. Many of the people who are in parliament today, the first thing they will look at when they look at the law is if they would have been a candidate or would they have been elected if this law was now in effect? And if they don't see themselves in the picture, they don't like it". Accessed January 18, 2008.

Beirut city population is estimated to be as between 1.200.000 and more than 2.000.000. The limits of the town are not clear and census always represented a sensitive issue in Lebanon. Authors worldwide always underlined the role of the city as the cradle of individualism, where the individuals manage to place themselves at a distance from family solidarities. The city is also considered as the guarantor of individual freedom and where the idea of a national state could be born (Picard, 2002, pp. 3-4; Salam, 1998, p. 141). But Beirut, even in the possibility to reach the estimate of 2.000.000 persons, difficultly can be labeled as a metropolis. Lebanon is just 4.000.000 population, following the highest estimations, and its geographical territory is very small, such to permit reaching the more distant border in maximum three hours. As a consequence, each place in Lebanon is easily reachable in few hours, denoting already a strict connection between center and periphery. The connection between city and mountain, or city and village, is an historical reality of Lebanon and it still stubbornly persists, rising and mingling with the debate on the historical foundation of Lebanon, and the deep identity of being Lebanese.[115] It is difficult to depict the reality in a different way, considering the importance in the Lebanese society nowadays of the extended family and the village life. The village of origin is a common used daily identification of the interlocutor. "*Min wein enti?*"[116] It is one of the first questions when Lebanese meet, and it aims to recollect information on the

115 On the relation mountain and city see: Hourani, A. (1976). Ideologies of the Mountain and the City, in *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, London: Ithaca Press. Then for the other history concerning Lebanon's history see: Salibi, K. (1989). *Une maison aux nombreuses demeures*. Paris : Naufal. On the perception of the Independence Uprising of 2005 as a rapprochement of mountain and city, see : Gahre, C. (2007). Staging the Lebanese nation: urban public space and political mobilization in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination. Thesis (M.A.)--American University of Beirut, Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies

116 It is possible to translate this common Lebanese expression with "Where are you from?".

interlocutor, his geographical origins and community of belonging. The importance of village origins is increased also by the institutional practices that make people vote in their native village. Institutions connect the individual with the family and the city with the village. Individuals living in the city expand from peak of strong individualism to peak of intensive traditional family solidarities. The spring and summer weekend are for most of the Lebanese dedicated to the village or to the mountain, to visit the other half of the family still residing there. The country is not big and the two neighbor countries are closed for most of the Lebanese. The Israeli border is closed for everyone and the Syrian one is for a lot of the population unconsidered, either for political reasons or for fears. The stereotypes on the internal "Others" make also viability complicate within the capital and within the country. The only solution is often the *ziara*, the visit, to the well-known, the village of origin. On the other side the city, due to the same mentality of unknowledgeable and stereotypes, is for a lot of people just a *mantaa*, an area, a small district. The geographical space peculiarity of Lebanon and Beirut will be better analyzed in the next chapter, but it is notorious that for example many Lebanese do not cross the East-West borders, or never went to the suburbs or have never seen the Armenian area of Burj Hammoud. On a *servis*, the peculiar and popular way to move in Beirut, it is easier to go from Hamra Street to Corniche al Mazraa than to trespass the Ring and reach Tabaris Square, even if at a shorter distance. Due to stereotypes, policies of communal strongholds and legacies from a fatal past, the life of the city or of the *mantaa* resembles often that of a village. The possibility to meet the same people in the street and in public places is very high and rumors and voices spread very fast in town. Going out from Beirut for many Lebanese is like going out of the *mantaa*. The strict connection between mountain and city shows that the mentality in the city is similar to that of the mountain or, at least, the Lebanese dissimulate city mentality while in

the mountain. It is impossible to generalize, and counterproductive, but these considerations are valid both for the visible public and the largest invisible masses.

These indications are not going to shape the idea of Beirut and Lebanese life in the city as the cradle of individualism. But it is necessary to take into consideration other factors that better could help shaping a general panorama. Beirut is generally, and above all, the place for the individuals to develop their ambitions. Most of the Lebanese, like the Syrians coming glittered by Beirut liberal openness, join the town to literally conquer the world. Beirut is for a lot of people the launching ramp for exporting what of most richer they have: themselves. Personal ambition is first place in the rank of Lebanese individuals prerogatives and in their self-representation, sharing the highest rank with the family. A spirit between neo-Phoenician and Machiavellian that exemplifies the strength of the idea of "becoming someone", making money or increase their own status in front of the other, in a perfect arena of competition. Beirut individuals are not lobotomized automatons that fill the tube or those that are passively walking toward big industrial factories. Michel Chiha, founder of the Lebanese entity, is one of the main promoters of such an idea of the Lebanese people:

> "The Lebanese are not made for working on mass production; it is not in their temperament, nor does their genius lie in it. What we have here is diversity, helped on by ingenuity – the redeeming feature. It is to be recommended that our apples be always of the same quality, and that this quality be fine; less recommendable is it that the Lebanese finish up in a factory and become stultified by adjusting the same movements behind machines. That is a work of robot; it is not our task and there will never be any future for us in that line...We must exercise all our ingenuity in tracking down individual vocations instead of thwarting and bullying them;" (Chiha, 1966, pp. 138-139).

Individuals, also due to the lack of a real and webby public service transportation, use the car to move, a clear example of individual autonomy. The absence of a real state and the lack of well functioning public institutions leave Lebanese individuals alone, or with family help, to find their way in the jungle of the city.

Lebanon, and Beirut especially, is the country of services. Services, servilism and individualism are different faces of the same coin. If it is raining and you need to cross the road to a club, someone is there with an umbrella; at the supermarket someone will put your food in a bag and carry it to your car. Valet-parking is a strong reality of Lebanon to such extent that also McDonalds has one. Sri Lankan maids are a usual and common sight in taking care of children and silently preparing food in the kitchen. All these factors are making the Lebanese enjoying their individuality, at the expense of the use of human beings almost as slaves.

Salam is considering in a meaningful essay the acceleration of the process of individualism in Lebanon, due to the development of modern capitalistic forms of economical organization, the idea of "carrière" and the development of modern education. According to Salam, Lebanese of the city are living a half individualism that is oscillating between two extremes: compulsive individualism and family solidarities (Salam, 2003, pp. 137-150). The Lebanese individual, as a political entity, gathers other prerogatives, but with similar structural conditions.

2. No Exit Way from the System

The individual in Lebanon, due to the prerogatives granted to the communities, is defined by the system as with a communal and national identity, making of the community the political and institutional intermediary between the individual and the state. Such condition provokes that the Lebanese individual, in order to enjoy of political and consti-

tutional rights, needs to belong to a community. The affiliation of the individual to a defined community is compulsory in Lebanon, and in the adverse case the individual would be affected by a *capitis deminutio* (Salam, 1998, p. 57). The Lebanese individual for the national institutions is thus spilt between two systems, a national one and a communal one. Articles 9 and 10 of the Constitution, with article 95, are the ones concerning the prerogatives of the communities. These prerogatives reflect on the individual in a way that he is allowed, but not obliged, to receive a particular education in line with his faith, but at the same time is obliged to deal with community's tribunals and laws on issues concerning his personal status, as inheritance, birth, death, divorce and marriage. No other options are proposed to him. Article 95, but more definitely the electoral law, is then establishing the individual participation at the national political life on a confessional basis. The electoral law, as above underlined, does not reserve any of the 128 seats of the Parliament on a non-confessional base. Although individuals are allowed to participate in Lebanese political life with a personal non-confessional identity, it results extremely hard for them to access the institutions, especially due to the electoral system. On the other side, it is possible to find articles of the national Constitution that concern more the individual in relation to the state, and not to the community. Article 7 of the Constitution is providing the individual with equal access to state institution, but in an apparent contradiction with the electoral law and article 95 that allows only members of certain defined community to hold especially high offices (Salam, 1998, pp. 56-59).[117] The examples of inequalities in holding higher offices in consideration of the community of belonging are a lot and they are also in contradiction with article 12 of the Constitution,

117 Article 7 of the Lebanese Constitution: Equality - All Lebanese are equal before the law. They equally enjoy civil and political rights and equally are bound by public obligations and duties without any distinction.

concerning the equal access to public offices.[118] It seems indeed necessary to mention that, as a consequence of the confessional political system, a member of the Protestant community, for example, will never be able to hold the office of Prime Minister or President of the Republic, and so on.

A related issue is that of considering or not the Lebanese individuals as citizens (*muwatinin*), as a consequence of the civic and political equality established by the Constitution, or just as community subjects (*ahlin*), due to the inequality in access to public and political offices (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 109). Arguing on the institutionalization of the communitarian system, other authors linked the issue of the individuals and citizenship to a contradiction to the idea of democracy and the idea of citizenship, in relation to the extended family factor, in the so-called modern societies (Picard, 2002, p. 4 and p. 22). Some other scholars consider that the Lebanese confessional system is a model that does not produce a citizen.[119]

It is not the aim of this study to deal with the intricate concept of modernity or to go into a deep investigation of the level of democracy of the system, but it is important to arise some empirical questions on the idea of citizenship. The necessary question that arises is one concerning specifically the individual. Is the system, providing the community with rights, removing rights from the individual? It is necessary to underline that the individual does not have multiple options and he has instead to submit himself to the rules of the community. It is difficult and maybe

118 Article 12 of the Lebanese Constitution: Public Office - Every Lebanese has the right to hold public office, no preference being made except on the basis of merit and competence, according to the conditions established by law. A special statute guarantees the rights of state officials in the departments to which they belong.

119 Krayem, H. (2006, June 16). State formation, Cultural and Political Pluralism. LCPS, Workshop on "Between Political and Cultural Pluralism: The Evolution of National Cohesion and Concepts of Citizenship in Lebanon and Iraq", Beirut, 16-17 June 2006.

pretentious to debate in the framework of the Lebanese context about collective and individual rights, but such issue can raise some more interrogatives on this topic. Does the individual in a communitarian system such as Lebanon need more rights? On one side the individual enjoys the rights granted to his own community, but does he enjoy of the same rights as a national citizen or as an individual belonging to the state?

The Lebanese system does not present an exit way for those individuals that do not want to publicly recognize themselves as members of a community, but instead as directly belonging to the nation. The system is not providing with an option or an opportunity to choose. The system, and it looks like its major pillar, develops the tendency of not allowing individuals to escape it. One of the forms that Lebanese individuals use to contrast such condition on a national level, is the campaign for the creation of community of civil status, through the institutionalization of the civil marriage, that is also linked to the deep chronic patriarchalism that rules Lebanon and the importance of religious figures in the public sphere. Salam describes the tension between two different models as follows,

> "L'individu se trouve écartelé entre deux système de valeur opposée, et les stratégies d'action différent qu'elle supposent, mais que son statut "civil" reste également inachevé, le poids de traditions et la force des résistances communautaires faisant obstacle a sa pleine réalisation" (Salam, 1998, p. 52).

Is the Lebanese individual trapped between a necessary and institutional communal affiliation and an undeveloped national status that does not allow him to fully participate in the political life of the country? Is the Lebanese individual trapped between a condition of subject and a potential full citizenship?

As we will see in the next lines it is necessary to look at the whole framework that includes the claims for the creation of a community of

civil status, the possible option for a civil marriage, the establishment of a civil state and the call for a secularization of the country.

3. A New Identity and More Rights: Claiming for a Community of Civil Status

The creation of a community of civil status and the option for civil marriage are two issues strictly linked one another. Both are also strictly related to two more issues: the secularization of society and the Lebanese patriarchal system. While we will briefly discuss the role of patriarchalism in Lebanon, an issue that is strictly related to the idea of equality in terms of citizenship, we will defer the discussion on secularism, as a suggested "final-solution" for the system, to the next paragraph.

All these issues are related to an accomplishment of the role of the citizen in the Lebanese system. Many civil organizations in different times have lobbied for the establishment of a personal status that will be under the Lebanese civil law. Civil marriage campaign is the way that most of these organizations used to reach this objective. Civil marriage is strictly forbidden in Lebanon, as in many other Arab countries, and Lebanese use to get married abroad, by simply going to Cyprus or Turkey.[120] On they way back the state recognized their union, but they still reside in a limbo position. Civil marriage is mostly opposed by the same communitarian logic that unifies religious and political leaders that they will risk to lose a quantity of members of their community, that they will not join another one but will stay out of the system. Religious figures opposition to civil marriage could also be read in economic terms, due to the amount of incomes the community is making through the celebration of marriages and all the practices related to family law.

The first attempt to create a community under the state civil law has

120 It is necessary to remind that such practice concerns also Israeli citizens.

been in 1936, through the article 14 of the Law 60, under the initiative of the French mandatory power (Rabbath, 1986, pp. 102-106; Hanf, 1993, p. 134; Messarra, 1994, p. 90).[121] The strong rejection expressed by the main Lebanese communities in implementing such decree left the law unresolved and never applied. The civil status issue appeared frequently in Lebanese history and it is strictly related more than with rights for the individuals, as a form to implement and create a base for a secular society. The issue always encounters the rejection of religious communal leaders and on their behalf of the political leaders of the larger communities. President Elias Hrawi too, at the end of his mandate, proposed at the Parliament a draft for the creation of an optional civil marriage (Reinkowski and Saadeh, 2006, pp. 99-116; Gutierrez de Téran, 2003). The law was strongly rejected by the major religious figures.[122]

Civil marriage would further the role of the woman in a patriarchal society such as the Lebanese and create the institutional base for equality between men and women. The women status is a complicated reality that in certain case falls under the communal law, while in other cases under the civil law. Women cannot give, as in many other Arab countries, their Lebanese nationality to the children had with a foreign citizen. As a contradiction, or better as a patriarchal mean, the Lebanese nationality law gives the authorization to a foreign woman to acquire Lebanese nationality, and later on to give it to her children in case her husband

121 The French mandatory authority established in 1936 that "Les communautés de droit commun organisent et administrent librement leurs affaires dans les limites de la législation civil". Quoted in Messarra, A. (1994), Théorie générale du système politique libanais, Cariscript, Paris; p. 90.

122 On the reaction of the main religious communities leaders to the proposed civil marriage of 1998, see: Reinkowski, M. , & Saadeh, S. A. (2006). Nation divided, Lebanese Confessionalism. In *Citizenship and Ethnic Conflict: challenging the nation state*, edited by Haldun Gulalp. London : Routledge., pp. 109-112. See also: Hrawi civil marriage bill comes under fire (1998, January 3), *The Daily Star*; Preachers stir civil marriage protests (1998, March 28), *The Daily Star*.

died, but does not authorize the Lebanese women to do so. The law on citizenship and naturalization of 1st November 1960, does not grant citizenship rights to children of Lebanese women married to non-nationals, provoking, as one of the consequences, the necessary and contradictory annual renewal of residence permit for the children. The father results as sole legal guardian of the child.[123]

In 1974 and in 1994 huge campaigns went on in order to establish a uniform civil law of personal status, but both were not successful. The dichotomy here is between the constitutional equality for all the Lebanese individuals and the configuration of a strict patriarchal state, where religious institutions, in case of constitutional amendments, need to give their consent before any change. These conditions are clearly making of the women, on an institutional level, second-class citizens. Such second class citizenship is attested in most of the personal status laws of the various Lebanese communities where for example in terms of inheritance the woman is relegated to a different condition from that of a man. Here we don't take into consideration also the social consequence of an institutional patriarchal society on the role of the women in the Lebanese society. As a clear example in terms of access and presence into national political life, it was necessary to wait until the formation of the Cabinet in 2005 in order to see for the first time woman holding a minister posi-

123 For a glance on the discussion on the periodical appearance on the national press of civil marriage issues and women status, see: Lutz, M. (2006, March 8). Law does not recognize children of Lebanese females. Crtda calls for right of all lebanese to pass on nationality. *The Daily Star*; Ajami, L. (2007, August 3). As civil marriage remains firmly off the political agenda, couples head to Cyprus to say 'I do'. Critics insist a law to legalize such unions will never pass because influential religious leaders resist any move toward secularization. *The Daily Star*; Haidar, K. (2007, August, 27). Antiquated laws violate women's civil rights. Discriminatory legislation contradicts constitution, which guarantees equality for all citizens. *The Daily Star*; Zaatari, M. (2007, September 13). Campaign gets under way to secure equal nationality rights for women. *The Daily Star*.

tion.[124]

Considering that woman's condition is regulated at the same time by national law and by communal laws of personal status, it is possible to raise some empirical questions. Should women lobby only on a national level, or should they lobby also on a communal level? How can women change their personal status if not also through a pressure within the community?

The questions of rights is related with the claim for a new secular identity that still have to find its place in the confessional system, and that carries within the idea of a whole secularization of the Lebanese society, in order to establish a civil state.[125] Certainly, if on one side the implementation of the civil marriage would represent an achievement in terms of rights and institutional equality of all the citizens, on the other side, the same implementation would clearly erode communities' power, that is definitely one of the main pillars of the Lebanese system. Therefore, women discrimination, with reference to the compulsory family law, represents a clear base of the system.

E. Confessionalism: a Scapegoat?

1. Against Confessionalism: Deconfessionalization

This study aims to deal with the current Lebanese system, and it does not aim to propose the best political system for Lebanon. It will be pos-

124 It is the case of Naila Mouawad. There are actually only five women in the national Parliament.

125 Zouk, N. (2007, July 11). "New organization aims to create a civil state in Lebanon. Current crisis results from flaw in political system", *The Daily Star*; Haddad, S. (2007, July 23). « Le centre civil pour une initiative nationale », mieux qu'un parti, l'ébauche d'une vision nationale. *L'Orient – Le Jour*. See appendix VIII.

sible in the conclusion to suggest or advance hypothesis on the steps that need to be undertaken in order to make better functioning the actual Lebanese political system, but this study avoids taking into consideration current utopian claims for a radical change of the Lebanese society.

In the national Constitution of 1926 and in the unwritten National Pact of 1943, the confessional formula is considered to be an interim procedure, a temporary solution for Lebanon. Riad el Solh, first Prime Minister after the independence of 1943 and in the aftermath of the National Pact so is affirming:

> "...Parmi les fondements de la Réforme, qui dicte l'intérêt supérieur du Liban, figurent le traitement du confessionnalisme et l'abolition de ses méfaits. Cette règle (du confessionnalisme) met obstacle au développement national du Liban et porte préjudice a son renom. Elle empoisonne, de surcroît, l'esprit qui préside aux rapports régnant entre les nombreux groupements spirituels dont le peuple libanais est formé. Et nous avons constaté comment le confessionnalisme a servi, la plupart des fois, a servir les intérêts des particuliers, en même temps qu'a infliger un affront a la vie nationale du Liban, d'une manière tell que lorsque le sentiment national l'aura empli, a l'ombre de l'indépendance et sous le régime du gouvernement populaire, le peuple sera porté, en toute quiétude, a abolir le régime communautaire, cause de faiblesse pour la Patrie. Le jour ou il sera possible d'abolir le confessionnalisme sera un moment de réveil national, total, béni, dans l'histoire de Liban" (Rabbath, 1986, p. 108).

The Taef Agreement of 1989 confirmed the transitional character of the confessional formula that should have taken place in the following two years.[126] Notwithstanding, the confessional system still represents the

126 The Preamble of the arranged Constitution signed in Taef is saying that: "The abolition of political confessionalism is a basic national goal and shall be achieved according to a gradual plan".

framework of the institutional rules of the game.

Even if it is impossible to define Lebanon as a clear-cut composition of various communities, what is clear is that the confessional formula, at least on an institutional and constitutional level, is drawing the rules of the game. Many have been the attempts to abolish confessionalism in Lebanese history, but all failed. The main reasons of such "failure" has to be found in the rejection by the main actors of the system in changing the status quo that could erode the base of their power. A wide campaign to tear down the confessional system went on in the dawn of the civil war and in the first year of the conflict. Already in 1973 the government announced the abolition of confessionalism for public offices, meeting with the disagreement mainly of the Christian factions (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 180). The so-called "progressive" forces involved in the civil conflict also stated in the first months of the war the opportunity to abolish the system of political and administrative confessional quotas (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 189). The war went on and the confessional system too. Taef Agreement of 1989, even if proposing the abolition of confessionalism, it instead reinforced the confessional structure of the system, remodeling the power-sharing system and fully involving the Shiite community in the political system.

Confessionalism resisted in maintaining the status quo and it still nowadays presents its own arms for self-defense, making many Lebanese considering a Utopia the idea of abolishing confessionalism.[127]

The different amnesty laws that were issued after the civil war, last of which the one that in the summer of 2005 permitted the release of Lebanese Forces' leader Samir Geagea, work under the banner of historical amnesia, in order not to render accountable the actors of those tragic years and to expulse from public discussion such an important topic.

127 It is the case of Joseph Maila quoted in Hanf, T. (1993). *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon. Decline of a State and birth of a Nation*. London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, p 588.

A fact that is going hand in hand with the continuous appeal to avoid certain issues that could provoke sectarian strives and hurt the sensibility of the different communities. A provision that is also included in the Penal Code, with the main objective of avoiding public discussion on confessional issues (Messarra, 2003, pp. 266-2689.[128] Another actor that has been nowadays assigned to work for maintaining the system is the well-known Sureté General. Sureté General is blocking those cultural or artistic pieces that aim to discuss sensitive topics, such as the civil war, the incongruousness of the system or the recent national history, provoking hysteria in those Lebanese that are proposing artistic or cultural events.[129]

The system is strong and avoids the abolition of confessionalism in coordination with the national main actors. The stance of certain parties, that claim for a complete abolition of confessionalism, can better explain how the call for deconfesionalization can carry other relative issues and fears in some communities. Lebanon for example is the only place in the Middle East where Christians are not *de iure* o *de facto* second-class citizenships (Hanf, 1993, p. 208). The fear for the abolition of the confessional system, due to the fact that Christians are not anymore a demographic majority, comes for the possible return to the status of *dhimmi*, usual condition during the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The other fear comes from the possibility of the installation of an Islamic Republic, with similar consequences for Christians. It should be necessary to read the call for deconfesionalization in Lebanon as a way to gain more power in name of demographic numbers or as a way for smaller communities to have access to offices or power that the confessional formula not allow

128 It is the case of Article 317 of the Lebanese Penal Code.

129 Quilty, J. (2007, September 4). Briefly banned play traces sects' political morphings. Playwrights herald historically based drama as 'a way to talk about the present and the future at the same time. *The Daily Star*.

them.[130] The call for deconfessionalization is for these reasons often used as a threaten arm by the national political actors in their confrontation.

It is necessary to enquire if the confessional system represents the main source of instability in Lebanon or if its abolition has to be considered as the solution to the country periodical instability. We previously analyzed that the Lebanese system is not only made of the confessional formula, but by a mix of institutional and informal social practices. In this way the draft of the electoral law proposed by the Boutros commission, that was never discussed in the framework of the Lebanese institutions, but was instead vehemently criticized by the public opinion following confessional logic, is meaningful in touching the issues that affect the system. It is useful to remember the main provisions of such electoral law's draft. First, the possibility to vote in the place of residence, without going back to the native village, with the attempt to break kinship and client-patron relationships. Second, lowering the age of vote from 21 to 18, in order to give the possibility to the new generations to take a stand before fall involved in an age closer to marriage and family rules.[131] Third, a positive discrimination for women that would be provided with a political quota, in order to break the patriarchal order that rules the Lebanese society. And last but not least the creation of a mix system based on a proportional and majority vote, in order to touch directly the confessional system and give space to independent candidates and permitting non-confessional candidates to have the possibility to be elected. Crow in discussing the efficiency of public administration within the confessional system is clear on this,

130 It results interesting the reading that Hanf makes of the ideologies that hide communal interests. According to Hanf, "the communities use ideologies to dress their interests in modern clothes" (Hanf, 1993, p.138).

131 It is astonishing that most of the graduate students from the several Lebanese Universities obtain a degree without having the possibility to vote yet.

> "It is customary to attribute evils to the confessional system, frequently overlooking its positive contributions. Equally important is the fact that many administrative and political problems are largely a result of other features of society. Departure from the ideals of representative government and administrative efficiency may be the result of social structure, personal rivalries, individual incompetence and dishonesty, low salaries, and inadequate training. These problems would not disappear entirely if confessionalism were removed, if communal loyalties and feelings did not exist, and even if all Lebanese were of the same religion. If the religious factor were removed, it is possible that others, such as ethnic groups or ideological points of view, would assume greater importance" (Crow, 1996, p. 171).

Even if the confessional system increases these conditions, surely it is not the only factor involved. Some other authors address the lack of a civil society in the public sphere as the fault not of the system but of the structural client-patron relationship of the society (Messarra, 2000, p. 25). The abolition of the confessional system seems for many authors an unrealistic accomplishment, that also if undertaken, alone without other provisions, could lead to the creation of deeper mechanism of self-defense in the Lebanese communities (Salam, 1993). Other authors, even if considering the abolition of confessionalism as a necessary and urgent step, believe that it is necessary to proceed at the same level with the secularization of the society, in order to avoid an incomplete or instead dangerous process (Picard, 2002, p. 171). Secularism represents indeed "the quintessential Lebanese question"(Hanf, 1993, p. 209).

2. Secularism: Panacea for All the Ills?

The abolition of political confessionalism and secularism could appear as two faces of the same coin, but there is a subtle difference between

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these issues. The abolition of political confessionalism practically means that there will be no more political quotas for the Lebanese communities and at the same time there will be no more distribution of offices in the public administration depending on the community of belonging of the individual. Political confessionalism not implies the realm of the personal status that will remain in the hands of community's institutions. This last prerogative granted to community institutions would be removed by the implementation of a secular society, through the creation of civil laws concerning all the Lebanese individuals.

The idea of abolishing confessionalism that is more persistent in Lebanese society is without doubt that of moving to a secular state. The idea of secularization is, for most of the people involved in this process, strictly connected to the achievement of a modern society, in line

with the traditional Western idea of nation-state, where the individual is directly related to the state, without community intermediation in this specific case, and in order to achieve a democratization of the political life (Picard, 2002, p. 96). The same promoters of a secular society in Lebanon, that focus mainly on the idea of modernity, implicitly refer to the historical period of the *nahda*, a cultural trend of the 19th century that characterized the modern Arab world.[132]

We already analyzed briefly how it is possible to understand confessionalism as a modern system.[133] The idea of modernity proposed by the ones that stand for secularization, is directly claiming for following the example of such nation-state where individuals are equally recognized as citizens and with the same institutional opportunities. The secular approach, or option, would aim to erase the discriminatory measures of the confessional system and it will relegate confessional identity to the private sphere, although confirming on an institutional level the guarantees for religious difference. One of the first steps to achieve a secular state is seen in Lebanon through the implementation of the civil marriage. Another option discussed nowadays in Lebanon, is based on the removal of the confessional identity from civil registers. Confessional affiliation has been removed from the identity cards after the civil war, due to the noteworthy series of assassinations that provoked, but it is still present in state civil registers.[134]

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132 One of the prominent promoters of the "return" to the historical legacy of the *nahda* was Samir Kassir. See: Kassir, S. (2003). *Histoire de Beyrouth*. Paris : Fayard ; Kassir, S. (2004). *Considération sur le malheur arabe*. Actes Sud/Sindbad. On the intricate relation between *nahda*, individualism and censorship, see : Haji Georgiou, M. (2006, June 29). Pour le triomphe de l'individualité. *L'Orient – Le Jour*. Michel Haji Georgiou has been student of Samir Kassir.

133 On this, see: Makdisi, U. S. (2000). The Culture of Sectarianism: community, history, and violence in nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

134 Talal Husseini, former advisor of the Speaker of the Parliament, is running a cam-

Both options toward secularism are strongly debated within the Lebanese society, and involved a deeper approach based on rights and identity, upon we will make some considerations later in the next chapter. Secularization of the society is carrying, in the same way as deconfesionalization, other hidden questions. Will the secularization of the society open the door to the predominance of the political ideas of the demographically dominant group, or hide the rule of a single community upon the others? (Picard, 2002, pp. 169-170).[135] Is it possible to understand secularism as a replacement of the identity, a kind of *takiya*, in order to dissimulate behaviour of communal identity and provide the public with a modern self-image? (Harik, 2003).

Is it secularization the panacea for all the ills of the confessional system and of the Lebanese society? Being difficult to answer these interrogatives, it looks more important to understand the idea of sectarianism, as Makdisi underlined:

> "Without recognizing the historical, social and political complexity of sectarianism, the secular criticism of it will continue to be little more than indignant sound and fury – as impotent as it is misdirected. It will continue to miss the point, the intensity and the persistence of sectarian allegiances and antipathies. Sectarianism is not a disease but a modern reality that must be understood before it can be dismantled" (Makdisi, 2001).

paign on the abolition of the confessional affiliation from the state civil registers. One of his partners is Greek Catholic Bishop Gregoire Haddad, who is also one of the main promoters of a civil-secular state. See Appendix VIII.

135 Picard is suggesting that the secular approach of Syria and Iraq, at the time of Saddam Hussein, were just hiding the predominance of one community over the others, Alawi for the case of Syria and Sunni for the case of Iraq.

3. Options for Coexistence: Decentralization and Federalism

On approaching Lebanon through a community perspective there is always the risk to run across vehement criticism. Unfortunately or not, the Lebanese reality makes of the religious community an important social and institutional actor that is impossible to ignore. Furthermore in Lebanon it is possible to find groups, individuals and members that make of the community the basic step to change the system, through the claim of decentralization or federalism. Decentralization and federalism are both options that, as secularism, periodically recur in the debate on the resolution of the Lebanese recurrent political and systemic instability. Both the federalist solution and decentralization could lead to the partition of the country in confessional cantons or to the creation of mini-states. Even if never officially, Lebanon has an historical background of informal federalism, in relation with the concept of "retribalization" that especially in times of crisis pushes individuals in searching refuge within the community of belonging.[136] The dilemma comes from the fact that Lebanon is not a country with geographically homogeneous confessional communities. Surely, the South and the Bekaa are predominantly Shiite, the Metn is predominantly Christian, Sidon is generally Sunni and the Chouf is mainly Druze. But all these regions have small religious minorities gathered in few villages. It is the case of Byblos, with a small Shiite community, or of the tiny Christian villages around Bent Jbeil on the Lebanese Israeli border. In time of crisis, tension and violent clashes, as the civil war clearly showed, the first objective for the different factions was to clean off the presence of other communities in their area. It is the case of the Palestinian camp of Karantina in mostly Christian East Beirut, and of the Druze Chouf Mountain that were "cleaned" of Christian

136 On the concept of retribalization see, Khalaf, S. (2002). *Civil and uncivil violence in Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press.

in 1983.[137] Only two of the various examples that is possible to present here.

Federalism and partition of the country are two strictly related concepts, and it is what makes this option weak and easy to be criticized by the majority of the Lebanese. Many are the ones that understand federalism and the creation of mini-states in Lebanon as a tool that will help Israeli domination of the whole Middle East, through the usual colonial process of *divide et impera*. Arab nationalists especially reject such possibility. The application of the federalist option in the Arab countries has been always rejected by the Arab intelligentsia (Bengio, 1999).[138] According to Ibrahim, the federal formula, or what he calls "confederalism", could represent instead an interesting option in terms of rights for minorities and preservation of the Arab states (Ibrahim, 1996). Federalism in Lebanon has always been historically related to Christian's fear of becoming a minority in a Muslim majority society, and it is going back to the discussion during the French Mandate on the creation of a small Lebanon or of Greater Lebanon. There are not many groups in nowadays Lebanon advocating for the federalist option, considered almost as a taboo, but in times of crisis tends to show up. One example is that of *Loubnanouna*, a group definitely composed of Christian members, that clearly advocate for a federal and decentralized state, in order to resolve all the problems of instability due to the Lebanese system. Such a group has a special liberal approach to Lebanon, and it is advocating federalism as to promote minority rights, in name of diversity.[139] Such consideration

137 It is interesting, as Hanf relates, that in 1983 all the Christians from Chouf were expulsed by Druze militias, who also indiscriminately attacked those Christians that were loyal to the PSP militia of the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt. Confession matters in certain circumstances more than loyalty.

138 For the same reason many look with fear and suspiciousness the possible federation of Iraq after American invasion in 2003.

139 On the Lebanese political group Loubnanouna, see http://www.loubnanouna.org/.

allows us to link it to the discussion in the next paragraph.[140]

But the essential question remains the same: is federalism or decentralization the solution for Lebanese instability? It is difficult to answer, but probably a partition of the country would probably mean the end of the positive idea of groups' diversity and a stroke to the idea of coexistence between different religious communities.

4. Between Liberal and Tolerance: Suggestions from Minority' Rights Theory

We will now take into consideration some suggestions from the debate in political theory on minority rights. Two terms appear in this case to debate: the term minority and that of liberal society. It was mentioned and analyzed before the possibility to consider the confessional system as a form of providing with specific rights the Lebanese communities. The confessional system has been shaped on the previous *millet* system that was in force during the Ottoman Empire, and that provided non-Muslim communities with rights to have their own institutions and a certain internal freedom. The *millet* system, which collapsed with the *tanzimat* and under foreign pressures, was then in certain forms re-established during the process of formation of Greater Lebanon, and expanded in a

Concerning the movement political line with reference to the Lebanese political system, it is possible to see the thought of Sami Gemayel founder of the group and son of former President Amin Gemayel. See: Gemayel, S. (2007). La démocratie consensuelle: échec encore et encore. *L'avenir en points d'interrogation. Supplément de L'Orient- Le Jour paru le lundi 26 mars 2007*,64; Haji Georgiou, M. (2006, September 14). « Loubnanouna », entre la défense du pluralisme et la volonté de relève politique. *L'Orient – Le Jour*; « Helf loubnanouna », un nouveau mouvement politique fondé sur la reconnaissance du droit à la différence -(2006, Novembre 6), *L'Orient - Le Jour*.

140 It is also interesting that one of the authors mostly followed by the groups with federalist approaches is minority rights' theorist, Will Kymlicka.

double way. On one hand, through the adoption of a Constitution that was putting the accent on individual rights, but that was not dismissing communities' prerogatives. On the other hand, the *millet* system was expanded and included all the Lebanese communities, that mean either the previous Sunni majority, and the other Muslim confessions, such as the Shiite and the Alawite, that were previously falling under the fold of the Sunni Muslims.

In the debate in political theory on minority rights, the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire is taken as an example of a form of providing minorities with rights. The conclusion of the analysis on the *millet* system is however underlining that the Ottoman was not a liberal society, especially in consideration of the absence of any recognition to the individual freedom, and so it has been best labeled as a society with certain religious tolerance (Kymlicka, 1999, pp. 199-201).

At the light of these considerations and considering the fact that Lebanon was given a national Constitution with a double accent on the individuals and on the communities, should we consider the Lebanese entity as a liberal society? It is better to affirm that the answer is not easy and that the objective of this study is not to label Lebanon as a liberal or not liberal country. It would not make the difference. Authors are split on this issue, even if there is a predominant majority opting for the non-liberal solution. Who is opting for the liberal hypothesis is doing so without going deep into the assumption, and mostly considering the issue in relation to the geographical surroundings, and considering Lebanon the only liberal democracy of the Arab East (Hanf, 1993, p. 3), or the country that seems more closest to liberal parliamentary democracy regime, but at the same time underlining that is also closest to the social organization of the Ottoman Empire (Picard, 2002, p. 10). Others prefer to underline that the liberal democratic model takes the individual as the unity of analysis, and not the groups or the confessional communities (Hudson, 1968, p.

97). Liberal mentality is present in Lebanon and it often takes the shape of a struggle against social norms or traditional practices. Such mentality is grounded on an idea of modernity that takes as reference the liberal Western mentality.[141]

The liberal approach insists on a perception of the society that follows a model based on the individual, and its myth is represented by the Western secular society. Beside this debate around minority rights in liberal theory, we can advance some interrogatives that fit within the current study and the idea of citizenship above mentioned. For the aim of the study of the community public sphere within three Lebanese communities and the role of the individual, it is possible to pick up and analyze some considerations made in the debate on minority rights especially on the internal dynamics within groups granted with rights. This example will serve to raise some empirical questions useful for the analysis of the community public sphere, and in order to open possible future interrogatives and considerations on the Lebanese confessional system.

Kymlicka on one side, considering the limitations of the liberal principles on minority rights, is taking into consideration what he defines as "internal restrictions" of institutionalized community enjoying of rights, to its own members. Such issue raises the question on the dichotomy of solidarity and dissention (Kymlicka, 1999, pp. 195-199). In other circumstances, but on a similar issue, it has been raised the issue of the internal rules for members' conduct, many of them social norms and not laws, and that could assume in case of wrong behaviour the form of excommunication or ostracism (Kymlicka and Norman, 2000, p. 27). Such issues are strictly related with the concept of freedom for members of institutionally recognized communities. Dealing more directly with

141 One possible idea of modernity in Lebanon has been advanced by Deeb. See: Deeb L. (2006). *An Enchanted Modern : Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton and Oxford : Princeton University Press.

the Lebanese case, Hanf is instead raising the issue of secularism and he is concerned of the gap in a possible exit-way from the system for the individuals, and he opts for the creation of a new "community" for individuals and secularly oriented groups (Lijphart, 1995, p. 285).

The right to exit from the community is debated by other two authors. Kukathas is considering that should be always provided the individuals with "the right of exit", that is considered by him as the "essential liberty" in a framework of justice and tolerance (Kukathas, 1995, pp. 228-256). Green is instead taking the opposite stance in consideration to the right of exit. According to Green, the right of exit, due to the difficulty in certain case to avoid social practices, is not enough, cause sometimes useless or impossible (Green, 1995, pp. 257-272).

These examples can open some empirical questions useful for the case study or for final considerations on the system that will be advanced at the end of this thesis. What is the situation of the individual in Lebanon, considering also that there is no institutional right to exit? Is it affordable to leave the community in case of dissention, or does it represent a social obstruction that can provoke excommunication? Considering that the state is not mingling in community affairs, how the communal individual can contrast incongruous forms, or what is possible to call "illiberal ways", within the community? Is there any means to hold community institutions and figures accountable?

F. Theorem of the Vicious Circle

1. Who Changes What?

In July 2005, a new Cabinet was established as a consequence of the previous elections that took place in the month of June. The new Cabinet

was mainly the result of the victory of the former opposition that lead the Independence Uprising, but with a mixed participation of members of those forces that lost the elections, especially Hezbollah and Amal. After fifteen years of Syrian direct rule on Lebanon, at which is necessary to add its presence during the civil war, the new government has been called to lead such transitional phase in the name of reforms and changes. One of the first purposes of the new Cabinet was the creation of an independent commission of twelve members with the objective to draft a new and more representative electoral law. The Boutros commission, after nine months of work, presented the new draft with a special attention in not hurting confessional positions, and proposed what it could be interpreted as more close to Lebanese reality, although considering the possibility of changes in the draft during the Cabinet discussion. The day the draft was delivered, the Commission was dissolved and few weeks later the war between Hezbollah and Israel started, provoking a spiral of subsequent tensions in the country. Since then, due also to the political internal instability, or used as an excuse, the draft remained undiscussed and the debate was postponed in order to maintain all the public attention on the fight over the new President of the Republic. A brief discussion on the electoral law was staged in the spring of 2007, but it did not follow the advices of the commission, but it was instead displayed as a discussion in terms of repartition of power among the main national actors.[142]

To what extent the new electoral law would be accepted by the national leaders and to what extent would have substantially changed the Lebanese system? The reality is that the draft is already dead without being taken into consideration, and national leaders moved the focus to other issues. Another difficult question is to know if Lebanese main political actors would have permitted the application of a law that was

142 Fayad, E. (2007, April 2). La loi électorale, entre discours béat et pratique douteuse. *L'Orient - Le Jour*.

directly affecting their basis of power. The new draft of the electoral law was directly striking the Lebanese political system by addressing sensitive issues and would have lowered the implementation of the broad practice of the patron-client relationship. The law's implementation would have eroded the basis of power of traditional national communal leaders. A base of power that is grounded institutionally on the role of intermediary granted to the community in order for individuals to access the state, and then on a lot of clusters represented by the clientele, the patriarchal society and the power of religious figures at the national level.

A further question needs to be answered: should change come from the top or from the ground level? Is civil society useful to trigger processes of change in Lebanon? Would have Lebanese leaders sacrificed their power in order to get a more representative Lebanon? Should change come from the national sphere or from the community sphere? The vicious circle seems behind the corner. Who is changing what? According to Salem,

> "the sectarian regime is based on a consensus system that not permit vertical changes, but create certain leaders elected on sectarian distribution of seats. Indeed these leaders feed in the regime and have no interest in changing it" (Salem, 2006)[143].

Such considerations push to open the perspective on the national sphere and its actors, that are usually moving from the communal to the national sphere and vice versa. National individuals reject to consider themselves as belonging to a community, but considering themselves as national of the Lebanese state they address their claims to the Lebanese politicians

143 Salem, P. (2006, June 16). Sectarian Issues in Lebanese Constitution: Lessons to Avoid or Learn From? LCPS, Workshop on "Between Political and Cultural Pluralism: The Evolution of National Cohesion and Concepts of Citizenship in Lebanon and Iraq", Beirut, 16-17 June 2006.

in the national sphere. The deadlock comes from the consideration that these Lebanese politicians are mainly leaders of communities. It seems that addressing them is not making sense. While addressing them on a national level, on a communal level, that represents the institutional basis of the system and where these leaders legitimize their power, these leaders are free to act in the way they prefer without receiving any challenge or forms of accountability. The purpose is to move the focus on the community sphere, due to its importance in the system, and to check the dynamics of the public sphere.

The system difficultly accepts radical changes, but just a redefinition of the power-sharing. Since 1862, with the creation of the *mutasarrifiyya*, the system did not change in its basic structure, represented by the subdivision of power within two religions and various confessions, but only in its shape. The number of the seats in the Parliament increased several times and once decreased in order to contrast traditional leaders. In this latter case the proportions changed but did not change the structure that resisted with the same shape. After the last national shaping of the system, the Taef Agreements, the communitarian system has been instead reinforced, making pure utopia the call for deconfesionalization.

The vibrant web of the so-called Lebanese civil society, not without its own fault, clashed with the unchangeable system and its status quo. Not surprisingly, the struggle for political power led political leaders to continuously resort to traditional techniques of building and maintaining their influences and power bases. According to Crow, they have perpetuated the traditional attitudes and political behavior patterns, with the result that civil servants attempting to pursue formal administrative goals continue to be frustrated and discouraged, while the public maintains its traditional modes of gaining access (Crow, 1996, pp. 182-183).[144] Such

144 Crow is talking as well of a sort of "vicious circle", making reference to the Lebanese public administration.

conditions create a sort of frustration for most of the Lebanese population, that cannot find the way to contrast such system. The political representation is the same since ages, and only the civil war permitted the entrance in the system of new actors that distinguished themselves mainly as militia leaders, and this needs special consideration, through community channels. According to Hudson, studying the Lebanese Republic in 1968,

> "Power in Lebanon is monopolized by an establishment of clerics, semi-feudal political bosses, bankers, businessmen and lawyers. The members of the establishment come from fewer than fifty prominent families" (Hudson, 1968, p. 126).

Today's situation seems different and with different actors, but in practice it seems very similar to that depicted by Hudson. Hudson is adding another interesting point that helps understanding the level of abstraction that population can live:

> "Notables whose political orientations are diametrically opposed shared an awareness of the fragility of the Lebanese political situation and of the new social and international forces that challenge it. At the popular level, it is hard to observe any positive Lebanese consensus, but within the establishment there is most definitely a common code of political conduct" (Hudson, 1968, p. 147).

Behind the higher rank actors, communal leaders and usual elites, a range of personalities are continuously changing, as the example of the results of the elections of 2005, but with a condescend attitude to the leader of their political bloc. Alliances too changed but in order to keep the power and leave out from the game new actors, or to co-opt them in a

system that is normally based on strict polarization. The state in these circumstances looks more like a recollection of communal leaders that held out their position, avoiding the entrance of new actors inside the game. The rules of the game are continuously discussed and present gaps that leave the space for different interpretations, giving leaders a sort of legitimacy facing individuals, and creating a polarization characterized by a concept of "with us or against us", that push almost all the Lebanese to take a side, blocking the creation of a space for whoever want to avoid such polarization. Such political struggle is invading and covering the entire national sphere, through media channels and informal relations. The Lebanese population is completely absorbed by the political struggle that feed them everyday, but at the same time, they don't have the necessary tools to positively influence such struggle, provoking their full abstraction in a process that cannot control and that affects their daily life.[145] The same main political actors are at the same time performing in the national sphere and in the communal one.

So, as the circle becomes more and more vicious, it is necessary to directly analyze the basis of the system that is grounded on the role of the community as intermediary between the individual and the state. Which are the dynamics of public sphere on the community level? And what is the role of the individual in the community sphere?

2. Summarizing the System: Individual Trap or Multiple Duties?

The definition of the Lebanese individual seems a quite complicated issue. The system is considering and recognizing the individual first of all as a member of one of the various Lebanese communities. Belonging to one of this community, the individual is provided with political rights.

145 Hankir, Z. (2007, October 27). Dreaming of March. The Lebanese are haunted by politics, even in their sleep. http://nowlebanon.com/. Accessed October 28, 2007.

So, how is it possible to define the Lebanese individual? Is he a citizen of the state, a member of a specific community or a national subject? The answer is not of easily resolution, considering also the duplicity of the Lebanese system and the split between the national and the communal affiliation.

The community in the Lebanese system, considering it under a liberal perspective, is occupying the role that in different societies is played by the political parties, the syndicates, the associations, as intermediary in the relation with the state. But the community in the Lebanese case is not only composed of the community as a clear cut, but by different clusters that are acting in concomitance with the community, such as the extended family, confessional parties and the local notables. Such various clusters coincide with different forms to access the state. Furthermore, the individual is not allowed to leave the community in a formal way in name of a national primary identity. Community affiliation is compulsive for enjoying political and civic rights. It seems so, from a preliminary observation, that the individual is split between a communal and a national belonging, that could bring to suggest a double or multiple citizenships. The national level however seems to be a difficult realm to access and that needs to be done through special community channels, or through one of its clusters. So, what is the condition of who is rejecting the communal identity? Is this individual trapped in limbo?

Each community is ruling on the personal status of its members, through communal institutions and communal figures that are vehicular in political terms. The state at the same time is not allowed to mingle in community affairs concerning these issues, and, as a non-written rule, also the other communities are not allowed, resembling almost an "interference in the internal affairs of a nation state". It looks urgent to analyze the role of the individuals within the community sphere, in order to understand the functioning of a basic sphere and the ground of the whole

Lebanese system. It is necessary to question, considering the dichotomy of the system, in which form the individual is acting within the community sphere.

All these questions push to move the focus from the national sphere to the complementary community sphere, in order to shed light on the Lebanese system, and in particular on the role of those individuals that will be called communal individuals.

3. On Communal Individuals

It is difficult to give a clear definition of communal individual, due to the fact that the identity and the realms of actions for Lebanese individuals are not so clear defined. This consideration is already telling us how the communal sphere and the national one are difficult to separate from one-another, and as a consequence to separate their actors and classify them as communal or national actors. From a first glance on Lebanon, it seems clear that many social, civil and political actors are rejecting the community sphere, as a consequence of the lacerations of the communal identities considered as backward or as spreading sectarian violent feelings. This process, and the absence in a wide part of the population of a positive representation of the communal identity, pushes many Lebanese to reject the communal identity. In the conclusion of this study it will be possible to raise some questions on the consequences or the cause of this common national behavior.

In the meantime we will define the communal individual, generally, as the person that is appearing in the realm of the community sphere. Such a communal individual can or not accept a communal identity, and this is not important for the study at this point, but he is dealing with affairs concerning the community, either on a direct form or through a spatial presence in the territory of the community.

We can also advance that potentially each Lebanese individuals is a communal individuals. This last consideration will be useful in the conclusive chapters while analyzing the role the system implicitly requires to Lebanese individuals.

The spectrum of communal individuals analyzed here in this study is considering religious figures, communal leaders, social communal actors, local authorities, political communal figures or individuals working within the community. As from the actors mentioned, it seems that the study has a long range. It is necessary to underline that it was impossible to cover all the main communal individuals within the three considered communities, and that neither was the objective of this research.

In line with the different issues that would be discussed in the next chapters, some meaningful communal individuals have been selected. The various issues were discussed in a different way in the three considered communities, but were taking some samples in order to shed light on certain characteristics of the community public sphere. Also this study did not take into consideration what we can label as the "ordinary communal individuals", but we will highlight some of their thoughts during these years of participative observation on the field.

The communal individuals that have been here taken into consideration are not only those ethnic entrepreneurs or communal activist in a strict sense (Hanf, 1993, p. 34), but will include also individuals with no special attachment to the community realm, or with a rejection of national identity, but that in some way they enter the communal sphere through their actions.

The main question this study wants to answer concerns the communal individuals' role within the community public sphere. How do communal individuals act within the community? Are they working to extend and develop the community public sphere?

IV. An Inquiry into the Lebanese Public Sphere

"When a public sphere is lived through a proxy it becomes a space of rumors. Opinions become speculations caught in a web of dubiousness. Speaking turns conspiratorial as we enter public time as matter for experimentation, as mice in the laboratories of opinions caught between accidental death and disfiguration" (Public Time. Bilal Khbeiz, Fadi Abdallah, Walid Sadek. HomeWorks III).

"Del resto forme di associazione dei cittadini, perfino dei sudditi, esistono in tutte le società ed erano presenti anche nella Russia sovietica – un sistema dove tutta la politica aveva finito con l'essere incapsulata dentro il partito unico – ma non basta questo dato per parlare di una società civile attiva. Essa lo diventa soltanto quando gli interessi vengono individuati, riconosciuti ed esiste un sistema di leggi e regolamenti che permettono di difenderli, cioè in cui i protagonisti esercitano una qualche forma di partecipazione attiva al governo delle cose comuni" (Chiesa, 2006, p. 35).

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the literature on the public sphere in order to reach a double objective. First, we will take into consideration the national public sphere, that is considered here to be complementary to the other Lebanese publics and to a certain extent, ties those publics together. Second, through literature review, suggestions extrapolated from analysis of the national public sphere, and in consideration of clusters of the previously analyzed system, we will pose certain empirical questions that will shape the variable to apply in the following chapters on the analysis of the community public sphere.

Before discussing the public sphere, it is necessary to address previously made assumptions. To start, although we cannot deny Habermas' influence, as he pioneered the original concept of public sphere, we will take some distance from it. Although some authors assume that Habermas' conception is strictly Eurocentric (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004, pp. 5-7), we cannot deny the wide use of this term in Lebanon. Indeed, in Lebanese society, the idea of public sphere/space is often central to debate for national actors and scholars.[146]

Our study is based on two preliminary assumptions: the need to move the focus to the community public sphere and the presence of multiple publics in Lebanon. It is assumed here, when we talk about the public sphere, that we refer to a supposed political force that enables individuals to have a say on issues and enables them to be visible actors. As a precondition of our work, we are taking distance from Habermas in the sense that while he implicitly associated the public sphere with a Westphalian-national state apparatus (Fraser, 2005, pp. 1-2). We will focus our study on the almost informal community public sphere where its importance is

146 The focus on the concept of public sphere/space in Lebanese society is wide. In 2003 an international workshop has been organized at the American University of Beirut on the concept of public sphere. At the same time the so-called Lebanese civil society is often organizing workshops on this topic, with a special focus on the public space.

due to the peculiarity of the Lebanese system. By addressing the issue in these terms, we are directly going against the basis of Habermas' concept of public sphere. Also, as the concept of public sphere is strictly related to democratic theory, we will take into consideration the notion of democracy but will avoid directly dealing with it, as this study focuses on the functioning of the Lebanese political system and not on democratic practices.

In this study, we will use the term public space with specific reference to a territorial/geographical connotation, while in other cases we will talk of "public sphere". In literature, public sphere has been related to the ideas of freedom, visibility, and criticism, while attempting to locate it in a defined space and time. It is as difficult to identify a native Lebanese language as it is to define the term public sphere within that language itself. The closest is that of public, which is divided among different concepts that will be analyzed in the next paragraph.

The Lebanese case, as it was presented in the previous chapter, seems to allow for a blurring of the boundaries of the generally accepted meanings of public sphere, either on an institutional or informal level. Finally in this chapter, we will discuss the literature on public sphere. Keeping in mind the peculiarity of the Lebanese system, we will propose some considerations on the national public sphere and open up certain empirical questions drawn from the peculiarity of the Lebanese case. These questions will represent the variables that need to be taken into consideration in the following chapters while analyzing the community dynamics of the three elected communities. The focus on the community public sphere is grounded in the assumption that in order to extend the Lebanese public sphere, the national public needs to be complimentary in action to the multiple communal publics.

The special focus on the internal public dynamics of the elected Lebanese communities is considered of great importance in order to analyze

the broad Lebanese public sphere, and it sheds light on the socio-political dynamics within them. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, for example, underlines the importance of the public sphere affirming that, "the development of a public sphere and a civil society constitutes a critical condition for the formation and continuity of constitutional and democratic regime" (Eisenstadt, 2002, p. 140).

The objective of this dissertation is to go beyond analyzing the possible multiple concepts of civil society and its relationship with the public sphere, and to go beyond arguing about the democratic character of the Lebanese state. Rather, we aim to analyze the public sphere, with a special focus on the framework of Lebanese communities through ideas taken from specific structures of the Lebanese entity.

A. "Going to Public": Setting the Framework of Lebanese Publicness

It is difficult to find an Arabic word to translate the concept of public sphere or the idea of public. The term "public sphere" has been roughly translated in Arabic, but is most often reproduced in English or French. It is useful to take a brief look at the possible connotations in Arabic of the idea of public, *publicus*. What is normally conceived as public, as related to the state, is normally reproduced in the classical Arabic word, *3am*, and in Levantine dialect with, *3omoomi*. Such terms make reference to public transportation, public toilettes, public gardens, and so on. Another term is, *jomhor*, in its connotation of public as audience or for everyone. For example, the President of the Republic is the, *raiss al jomhoria,* and the speech delivered by a politician aims to reach the audience, *johmor*. Another term that approaches the idea of public is that of, "*3alani*," which implies visibility and availability for everyone.

After this brief review, we will set the framework of Lebanese public-

ness, by taking into consideration the various connotations of the term public, as underlined by Fraser. Fraser considers four main senses of the term "public": public as State-related, public as accessible to everyone, public as of concern to everyone, public as pertaining to a common good or shared interest (Fraser, 1992, p. 128).

1. Public as State-related: Accessibility

> "Lo Stato non è solo il territorio, o solo la popolazione, non è identificabile nè con "governo", nè con "regime", non con le sole leggi e istituzioni: assumendo, invece, tutti questi elementi in sè, e non identificandosi con nessuno di essi, tutti necessari e nessuno sufficiente" (Chabod, 1961, p. 144).

It is necessary to consider the sense of public as state-related with two related perspectives: as strictly related to state and in terms of accessibility to the state. From a preliminary observation, it seems quite complicated to understand what is strictly related to the state, in Lebanon. If, on one side public policies do not have a strong echo in Lebanese society, on the other side, public services, as belonging to the state, evident by the almost nonexistent public facilities such as gardens, schools and healthcare institutions. If we assume for these first paragraphs a clear-cut traditional public/private divide, definitely in Lebanon the "private" overwhelms the public in these instances. The "private" is clearly represented in the Lebanese case by an intricate web of organizations and institutions run by political figures, political parties, communal leaders, traditional notables or notorious families. As actually being part of the state, or attempting to replace it, such actors tend to blur the divide between public and private.

As an example, the public Lebanese University is in far worse condition and more internally fragmented on confessional lines, than the private university institutions mushrooming in the country. Much like the

university, the public television station, Télé Liban, is in a weaker position with respect to the privately owned television stations. A panoramic look at Lebanese television stations can give a snapshot of the situation in Lebanon. Aside from Télé Liban, the other Lebanese private stations all belong to a political party, community or a specific political leader. These considerations will be linked to the idea of common good in the next paragraph.

The involvement of individuals further serves to blur the line on the relationship between the state as public and private. In the aftermath of the July 2006 War, several private individuals decided to cover the expenses of the reconstruction of the bridges destroyed by the Israeli bombs.[147] In that same timeframe, the state compensations promised by Siniora's government to the Lebanese that lost their homes more closely resembled a political attempt by the government to contrast the Hezbollah promise of compensation, than an actual public policy of the state. Similarly, aid to poor areas of Lebanon lies mostly in the hands of private philanthropic foundations that often have political-communal backgrounds and serve private interests, especially in the periods before electoral processes.

Public as state-related seems quite a complicated paradigm in Lebanon. The government, usually responsible for task of directly managing state institutions, has traditionally been seen in Lebanon, as equal to any one of the sides struggling for power, with clear communal interests. Instead we should consider the sixties and the time of Fuad Chehab's, as "the years of the state", due to the implementation of public policies

147 It is necessary to read such private initiatives as the attempt by notorious families or political leaders to gain support from the local population in a clearly patron-client manner. See: http://naharnet.com/ (2006, August 16). Influential Lebanese Businessmen and Politicians Vow to Rebuild the Country's Destroyed Bridges. Accessed August 17, 2006; Makarem, M. (2006, August 26). Madfoun, Maameltein, Ghazir, Jiyeh, Zahrani, Khardaly et bien d'autres. De nombreux ponts seront reconstruits grâce à l'initiative privée. *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

that tried to regain power from the hands of communities. The Chehab ages have been notorious also for the establishment of the "Deuxième Bureau", an extremely tough security service agency that was serving the state.[148] Nowadays, the situation also seems quite blurred in terms of "public" security forces. Security forces have always played a sensitive part in terms of state-relations and as being institutions strictly related to the state. During the civil war, when the government was directly involved in the internal fight, several Army brigades split along confessional lines. In more recent years, the national Army plays the role of the glue that holds the multi-communal Lebanese nation together. This was especially evident after the war in Nahr el Bared in summer 2007 and the Army now represents what is probably the only Lebanese public institution related to an idea of state.[149] Even with a sectarian repartition of the higher offices, the Army in the "ages of sectarianism" held an institutional function as representative of the state and acted as super *parts* institution in the political polarization.[150] In certain cases, other public security forces represent a strict confessional affiliation and have been accused of serving the interests of a specific group.[151]

As a consequence, it is necessary to consider, the dynamics between

148 According to Hanf, at the end of Chehab's era, various communities infiltrated the bureau and basically dismantled it. See: Hanf, T. (1993). *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon. Decline of a State and birth of a Nation*. London: I. B. Tauris Publishers; Fisk, R. (1991). *Pity the Nation. Lebanon at war*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

149 On the role of the Lebanese Army in Nahr el Bared and the public's positive reaction, see: Blanfrod, N. (2007, August 28). In Lebanon, soldiers win new respect. Nearly

150 Lebanese soldiers have died recently in clashes with Al Qaeda-linked militants, but growing public support has lifted the Army's morale. *The Christian Science Monitor*.

150 The Army did not intervene during the Independence Uprising, nor when the March 8th bloc staged a no-end sit-in in Downtown Beirut. Diplomatically, the Army did not take sides in the internal struggle and did not favor any of the two political blocs.

151 As is the case of the mostly Sunni internal security force, the Panthers, close to the Siniora government.

the state, the various Lebanese communities and the same confessional system, as well as the indirect relationship between citizens and state, that many consider to be behind the nation-state being an unfinished venture (Kiwan, 2003). The direct reason for the gap in the absence of the state as public can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the confessional system and being related to the idea of public, as accessible to everyone. Due to confessional allocations, the public political offices are not accessible to everyone, but depend, instead, on the community of belonging. This concept is at the basis of the Lebanese confessional system. Article 95 of the Lebanese Constitution exemplifies the public as of the state and the blurred boundaries between public of the state and communitarian. Informal rules keep many minister offices strictly related to a community or a person, not allowing for other communities to hold those offices. We will discuss the idea of accessibility, in relation to the public space, in the following paragraphs.

If communal interests mainly manage the state, should individuals move their focus to the community sphere, where they represent the primary segment of reference?

2. "Common Good" in a Multi-Communal State

On July 13th 2006, Lebanese Islamic movement, Hezbollah launched an attack on the border against an Israeli military station, killing eight soldiers and kidnapping two. The main consequence of Hezbollah's action was a 33-day long Israeli army retaliation, resulting in the destruction of buildings, roads, bridges and facilities all over the country. In the aftermath of the war, Hezbollah's unilateral decision to attack Israel, without questioning the possible response, produced a strong debate in Lebanon, dividing the Lebanese who were in support of Hezbollah's attack and those, instead who claimed the disparity of a war the country

did not ask for. The point of view of the character, Zeina, from the film *Under the Bombs*, who claims, "this is not our war", [152] is a blatant example of such divides in Lebanese society. Hezbollah's unilateral decision to attack Israel, without the participation of the Lebanese Army, took an unprepared Siniora government by surprise, provoking a serious crisis within the country. This example exemplifies the distorted boundaries of the idea of "common good" within the Lebanese nation.

Eickelman and Salvatore include the idea of common good in their definition of the public sphere:

> "It is the site where contest take place over the definition of the "common good", and also of the virtues, obligations and rights that members of society require for the common good to be realized" (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004, p. 5).

In Lebanon, it seems that on a national level, the same definition of common good is debated, and it directly interferes with the idea of "private" or communitarian interests. Following the withdrawal of the Syrian arbiter from the country, the national debate around the definition of common good, became even more prominent. The Lebanese state, almost as a gathering of various community representatives, does not present a clear-cut and unequivocal platform of the common good, where the main national political actors agree. It seems the idea of common good, on a national level is quite a volatile concept that goes hand-in-hand with stronger community interests. This leads to the idea of common good for the whole nation. At the national level, the definition of the common good the absence of the Syrian arbiter in the last years has magnified the

152 Aractingi's movie, *Under the Bombs,* released in Lebanon in December 2007 and produced during the July war and in the following weeks, illustrates such divide among the Lebanese. The main actor Zeina embodies one of the main messages the movie wants to transmit. The message coincides in considering that the war was not a Lebanese one, but one of Hezbollah against Israel that affected all the Lebanese.

internal struggle for the definition of the common good.

On the community level the situation seems different. The struggle brings forth the idea of sharing norms and responsibilities. However, is what applies to the national level due to the confessional system also valid for the community sphere? With the community being the segment of reference of the political system, how is the idea of common good being perceived within the community? And what is the individuals' role in shaping the common good of the community?

B. On Revolution (and Freedom)

> "The difficulty here is that revolution as we know it in the modern age has always been concerned with both liberation and freedom. The actual content of freedom is participation in public affairs, or admission to the public realm" (Arendt, 1963, p. 25).

> "Only where this pathos of novelty is present and where novelty is connected to the idea of freedom are we entitled to speak of revolution" (Arendt, 1963, p. 27).

Arendt's words, from her analysis of the two main revolutions of the eighteenth century, help us in drawing ideas from the historical events that occurred in Lebanon in the past years and provides us with an idea of the Lebanese public sphere in the aftermath of the "Cedar Revolution".

On February 15th 2005, Lebanese youth planted in Martyrs' Square to demand the "TRUTH" behind Rafik Hariri's assassination and the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. Independence, Freedom and Truth have been the main slogans that characterize that popular movement. "Independence" has been drawn from the official name of the Cedar Revolution, the *Intifada al-Istiqlal*, or Independence Uprising, and from the omnipresent

banner INDEPENDENCE 05. The permanent sit-in in Martyrs' Square was called the Freedom Camp and the TRUTH was everywhere in town– on billboards, posters, television and pins. The visual on the pins is similar to the typology of the Aids campaign but in the blue of the Future Movement, Hariri's family party and mostly Sunni Muslims. On April 26th 2005, Syrian troops left Lebanon after almost thirty years, a momentous occasion that also marked the end of the revolution and the sit-in from Martyrs' Square. The electoral process was oncoming and the usual faces and main leaders were on the stage bargaining and shaping incongruous alliances. Novelty was definitely missing as an outcome of the revolution. Arendt, in her analysis of eighteenth century revolutions makes a good point with regard to the results of these uprisings, and in some way, in

terms of terminology the narrative fit with the events occurred in Lebanon. According to Arendt, "the end of rebellion is liberation, while the end of revolution is the foundation of freedom" (Arendt, 1963, p. 140). Was the Lebanese uprising simply a rebellion against Syrian occupation or was it meant to impact a real change for Lebanon, in the name of freedom? The Lebanese uprisings marked a historical moment for Lebanon and achieved a formal independence, after a long occupation, but in terms of real change, the period following the rebellion disclosed a clear gap. It is no coincidence and quite telling, that one year after the uprising, the main slogan of the Lebanese activists changed from INDEPENDENCE 05 to FREEDOM 06. Many things still seemed necessary in order to mark these events as real change, in terms of freedom for the Lebanese population. According to the politicians of the majority, the revolution was on going after the "mistakes" of the days following the proclaimed end of the revolution. In the period that followed the creation of Siniora's Cabinet, when the majority and opposition were happily sharing power without serious complications, the rhetoric of the revolution was indeed overlooked. Instead, the political actors of the civil war were back. In this case, there was a sort of restoration of the old rather than the introduction of novelty and fresh alternatives in the political playing field. On a national level, the main novelty of the revolution should be noted as the definitive entrance of Hezbollah into the Lebanese public sphere and in the competition around the power-sharing.[153]

During this period, many Lebanese, most of them invisible Lebanese, took to the scene and publicly appeared in the streets in order to show their discontent. Therefore, it is necessary to inquire as to whether the revolution expanded the public sphere or now, was just a fight over

153 On Hezbollah's evolution and "lebanonization" in the last decade, see: Alagha, J. E. (2006). The shifts is in Hezbollah's ideology: religious ideology, political ideology and political program. ISIM dissertations, ISIM/ Leiden, Amsterdam University Press.

power-sharing, without the Syrian influence as arbiter. Did the revolution really open up the space for freedom?

According to Arendt, the definition of freedom is "characterized by the participation in public affairs or the indiscriminate admission to the public realm, is to be considered as a key factor that shapes the idea of the public sphere" (Arendt, 1963, p. 26). There is no doubt that the consequences of the Independence Uprising and the Syrian withdrawal completely changed the Lebanese scenario. While it was difficult to publicly talk about Syria, during the Syrian occupation, and even more difficult to criticize Syrian policy in Lebanon, the uprising and the subsequent years represented a great change in the overall public attitude. Many associations and political parties that could not formally register, due to Syrian presence in Lebanon, achieved that goal in the aftermath of Syrian withdrawal.[154]

Aside from the Syrian withdrawal, there are still many sensitive issues that cannot be addressed in public that deal directly or indirectly with the Lebanese system. The "Sûreté Générale", the main censorship branch in Lebanon, is still blocking or creating difficulties for people that want to address topics that concern the confessional system. The necessity of the intervention of a Minister in granting permission to perform the Rabih Mroueh's play, one that indiscriminately mocked people's attitudes parties and militias during the civil war, is a clear example of the work of the censor.[155] Lebanese journalists used to avoid issues concerning important Lebanese figures or belonging to the state security apparatus, in order not to fall subject to criticisms or to fall out of good favour. For example, the army did not allow the sharing of information regarding the fighting go-

154 The Beirut based Hayyabina association that could not officially be registered until the Syrian presence in Lebanon was expulsed, worked informally without recognition prior to that national event.

155 Only the intervention of the Minister of Culture Tarek Mitri granted permission.

ing on at Nahr el Bared camp. Cameras were not welcome and that cast a shadow over the freedom of information. Political criticism continues to be silenced in the Lebanese public sphere under censorship.

There is a significant event that occurred in the last few years that can help us to open up important questions for the analysis of the community sphere, the Lebanese system and the relation with the wide public. The Lebanese Broadcasting News (LBC), a private channel close to the Christian Lebanese Forces party,[156] screened a well-known satirical program, *Bas Mat al Watan*. The show included an actor, playing the role of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah.[157] The "fake" interview depicted Nasrallah in a comedic way, without really insulting him, but with other political figures mocking him. A few minutes after the screening, a long line of motor-scooters ridden by young Lebanese Shiites left the *al-Dahiya* Southern suburbs of Beirut and headed toward Ashrafiyye, the Christian heart of Beirut, to protest the television program. A few clashes erupted in Beirut and Nasrallah directly intervened, through a radio speech, asking his followers to go back home and to restore calm to the city. The point here is that since this volatile episode, Nasrallah has not been depicted in the program, and what is even clearer is that the screening has been interpreted by Shiites as a direct attack by Christians, further highlighting sectarian issues. This instance showcases the limits of the use of irony with regard to national and communal leaders in a public forum. A direct consequence has been the expulsion from the public of such issues, as the performance of the Army in Nahr el Bared camp.[158] It

156 There have been several recent attempts to rid the channel from the Lebanese Forces, even though most of the employees are clearly supporting this Christian faction.
157 On the same issue see Chapter II.
158 On the accusations of torture perpetrated by the Army and security forces in Nahr el Bared camp and how they have been left out of the Lebanese media, see: Gopal, A. and Kawzally, S. (2007, August 14). Army torture of Palestinian refugees, Electronic Lebanon. Accessed August 15, 2007.

is no coincidence that the human rights associations that bring attention to the violations of human rights are international rather than national organizations.

After the revolution, was the public sphere expanded or eroded? Did the revolution serve to expand the public sphere? Although we attempted to answer these questions, the short length of time that has passed since the occurrence of these events prevents us from making any clear statements. It is more important for our study to move these interrogatives into the community public sphere. So, was the Syrian withdrawal a response to an extension of the community public sphere? Are the national and the community spheres related? The revolution ended with a restoration (Arendt, 1963, pp. 36-40) and without newness especially in terms of representation and entrance of new faces into the national public sphere. Taking into consideration that the change did not work, how can individuals contrast against authorities that are national figures but whose powers are based in the community? What is the role of communal individuals within the community public sphere?

Based on this information, the focus on the national public sphere is not important enough to develop and extend the Lebanese public sphere, but, rather, it needs the support of complementary work to be done within the various Lebanese community spheres. Before moving to the community public sphere, it is necessary to take a look at the dichotomy that characterizes the debate on the public sphere: the debate of private and public.

C. Public and Private: Dichotomy or Flexibility?

> "Hurriyyat believes that the current official multi-confessional lifestyle and political system that is imposed in Lebanon actually encourages the persistence of

sectarianism, threatens the fulfillment of many individuals and alienates many from participating in the public sphere. The idea is that advocating for personal and private liberties—including those that are in conflict with religious values—would empower dissidence and weaken confessional affiliation and identity."

"By focusing on the impact sectarianism has on the privacy of the individual, we hope to come to a better understanding of the dailyness of sectarianism for the individual citizen. We also believe that sectarianism has strong alliances with the patriarchal apparatus, where the traditional family structure serves as the model for one's citizenship in the country. It is in this respect that Hurriyat Khassa's focus on individual freedom aims to transform the hegemonic political and social systems."

"We believe that since the Taif Accord, the obligatory belonging to a sect as the pre-condition of participation in the public sphere has had a devastating impact on the individual where a persistent violation of individual freedoms occurred and manifested itself in the following ways:

1. The erosion of the constitutional right of freedom of belief through confining the citizen to a specific sect as the natural, hereditary and unchanging destiny of Lebanese citizens. This is especially the case with the 2000 election law."

Respectively, these are three extracts from an interview with one of the founders of the Lebanese association, *Hurriyyat Khassa*, and from a draft document on political motivations of the same association in 2006.[159]

159 The organization *Hurriyyat Khassa* – private liberties – first began in 2002 but then dissolved for reasons of internal divergence between the members. There were then an attempt to establish the organization in 2006 with new leaderships, but it failed. Information on the issue is from an interview by the author with Nizar Saghieh, as well as personal participation of the author in a few meetings in 2006. See also: Author's inter-

The peculiarity of such association is the focus on private liberties in order to challenge the confessional system through a rights-based approach. From the association's perspective, the Lebanese system makes the compulsive belonging of the individual to a community a requirement in order to participate in the public sphere. Although it is possible to disagree with the implicit identification of the public sphere with the state, these statements highlight another meaningful factor: the consideration of the strict connection between sectarianism and the "patriarchal apparatus", a condition that pushes the organization to focus on the privacy and liberties of the individual. What *Hurriyyat Khassa* labels the "patriarchal apparatus", according to Joseph is a consequence of the fact that,

> "The Lebanese state enshrines patriarchal kinship further by elevating religious family law to public law. The state devolves the area of family law to the eighteen formally recognized religious sects (a common practice in many colonial and some postcolonial societies). In so doing, the state sanctifies family within the domain of religious discourse as something immutable and God-given, subordinating women (and men) to the ideologies and wills of patriarchal clerics. The religious courts in Lebanon regulate marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. Virtually all of these religious laws encode patriarchy" (Joseph, 1997, pp. 80-81).

The Lebanese confessional system delegates the prerogative to the communities to manage their own personal status laws, and through the recognition of the individual confessional identity as a necessary step to be recognized as a national citizen. These factors come together to create a

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view with Nizar Saghieh, September 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon. Farah, M. (2004, June 12). Group lobbies for basic rights. Hurriyat Khassa tries to present reality in Lebanon. Lebanese association pursues guarantees of individual freedoms for all. *The Daily Star*; Scalenghe, S. (2004, February). "We Invite People to Think the Unthinkable". An Interview with Nizar Saghieh. *Meriponline*. Accessed February 12, 2008.

rather peculiar framework and to reshuffle the public/private divide.

The public/private divide has always been a crucial point for scholars in discussions of the public sphere. So crucial, in fact, that the consideration of this point is a necessary stepping-stone for anyone who wants to approach the concept of public sphere. Both Jurgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt, two of the most prominent scholars who dealt with the idea of public sphere, consider the realms of public and private as separate spheres (Habermas, 1991; Arendt, 1958). In "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere", Habermas splits the public sphere into two: the first, of rational discourses and the second of communicative action, which can be characterized by cafes, newspapers and salons and the private sphere of the household. In addition, Habermas' idea of public sphere implies a realm separate from the formal structure of political authority and the space of households. Habermas adds that the public sphere is generally composed of "private persons" deliberating about "public matters" (Fraser, 1992, p. 112). Arendt, recalling the ideal place for discussion and politics of the ancient Greek *polis*, also assumes the division between public and private (Arendt, 1958). In the representation of these ideas, both scholars exposed themselves to the criticism of feminist scholars, especially Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser, as they assumed the split between public and private to be equivalent to separation between sexes. Feminist scholars add that such a dichotomy excluded women from politics and took part in a discourse of male domination that legitimizes women's oppression (Benhabib, 1992; Fraser, 1992). For these scholars, it is preferable to assume an idea of public sphere based upon a continuous renegotiation of the demarcation line between the private and the public. This is necessary in order not to exclude any issue from public debate that could be advantageous to dominant groups and individuals. Fraser assumes that such definitions of private, as pertaining to intimate, domestic and/or personal life, works to the advantage of domi-

nant groups and individuals and to the disadvantage of their subordinates (Fraser, 1992, pp. 115-116). Benhabib, criticizing Habermas on the same subject, is also assuming that the public sphere should include private interests (Benhabib, 1992, pp. 91-92). By affirming this, the feminist approach to the concepts of public and private leads to a more flexible idea of the two realms. Iris Marion Young, inspired by feminist criticism of traditional political theory, proposes a concept of a heterogeneous public, suggesting the proposed flexibility of the concepts of public and private "does not deny their distinction. It does deny, however, a social division between public and private spheres, each with different kinds of institutions, activities, and human attributes" (Young, 1990, p. 120).

Criticism from feminists suggests that such a dichotomy should not be considered fixed in space and time, in order to leave the door open to potential new issues that need to find their place in the public sphere. For these reasons, Joseph, relating the feminist approach and the centrality of the patriarchal structures in the case of Lebanon, is considering the public/private boundaries as "porous and fluid" (Joseph, 1997, p. 74).

In Western liberal political theory the dichotomy of public and private has been used to develop the idea of citizenship. The citizen is considered an individual directly related to the state, without institutional intermediaries. In Lebanon, it is possible to discuss this assumption with two different points of view: the institutional and the informal. First, the citizen is recognized as a member of one of the nineteen different confessional communities. Only with this identity, can he run for a seat in the Parliament and until recently, this identify was also giving him access to public offices.[160] In this context, the community represents a clear intermediary to directly access the state, serving to reshuffle the direct citizen/state relationship assumed by Western political theory. Second, in Lebanon,

160 Article 95 of the Constitution has been amended in the Taef Agreement. See Chapter III on this issue.

there are many informal intermediary clusters. These other clusters, represented by local notables are all informal institutions or authorities that provide access to their clients. Joseph is discussing the role of the community notables in Lebanon with regard to providing subsidization to their followers, as well as their relationships with the communal religious institutions and the family laws they manage. By doing so, Joseph is introducing another factor that needs to later be taken into consideration to develop a necessary empirical question: what is the relationship between the societal elite and the patriarchal apparatus? According to Joseph, "legal pluralism in family law has been not only a concession to the powerful religious institutions, but also a basis for the reproduction of the political elite as they constituted themselves in the early course of nation/state building" (Joseph, 1997, pp. 81-82).

Thus bringing about the empirical questions we should ask in order to analyze the community public sphere. Considering the role of community institutions as arbiters to the members of the community and the patriarchal apparatus represented by the community personal status law, do Lebanese individuals need to address their claim to the state on the national sphere, or do they need to lobby community institutions in order to change the personal status law that is in the hands of the community religious figures? Considering the implicit patriarchal institutional structures sanctioned by the Lebanese system, can women alter the oppressed status that relegates them to second-class citizens through lobbying the national sphere? If the elite ruling in the national sphere are empowering themselves through a patriarchal structure grounded in the community realm, are they addressed in the community sphere by their own members?

In the Lebanese case, the primary confessional identity is one of the main factors that reshuffle the public/private divide, and definitely makes it a component of the public sphere. The institutional predominance and

broad implications of the confessional identity lead to the formation of patriarchal structures in the society. Thus, it seems necessary to move on to the analysis of the relationship between religion and the public sphere.

D. Religion and the Public Sphere

Habermas, whose name is strictly associated with the idea of the public sphere, has been fervently criticized for neglecting the role of religion in the development of the public sphere. Habermas' "blind spot on the role of religion both as a central thematic topic in the early public sphere and as one of its enduring institutional bases" (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004, p. 6), attracted numerous criticisms with respect to his work on the structural transformation of the bourgeoisie public sphere. The most vigorous criticisms on such issues came from current scholars that applied the idea of the public sphere to the framework of Muslim majority societies. Authors belonging to this current of criticism are deeply concerned with the role of religion and religious movements in expanding and shaping the public sphere within societies. Habermas has been implicitly "accused" of proto-colonialism in neglecting a place for religious argumentation or religious movements in the public sphere, and considering religion as an obstacle to freedom and rationality of debate (Van der Veer, 2004, p. 30). These assumptions provoke analysis of Habermas' implicit position on secularism as a precondition for critical public debate, that is linked to the Western idea that religion take a backseat in the private sphere, suggesting the strict dichotomy of public and private sphere (Eickelman, 2002, p. 7). Such current of studies lay the groundwork for the inquiry into the public sphere in the context of Muslim majority societies, where it is assumed that boundaries of public and private are blurred. Such an

approach to Muslim majority societies can closely relate to the Lebanese case, in spatial terms, but at the same time remain a certain distance from it. While most of the literature of this ideology shows how dynamic religious movements represent a concrete challenge to the state and reshapes the public sphere, it remains unclear if our considered case can fit this framework. Considering the peculiarity of the Lebanese confessional system and its consociational structure, it is apt to be shaped as a gathering of community representatives. It is difficult to find direct challenges to an entity, the state, whose very existence is questionable. The challenge to the state from the socio-religious communities is substituted with the atypical dynamics of a power-sharing system where each community tries to get a bigger portion of the cake.

A palpable example directly concerning this specific case study is one that analyzes the role of the Hezbollah movement in challenging the state through the creation of their own social network running parallel to the state and for providing a subsequent political participation (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004, pp. 13-14). At the time of those authors' considerations, the Hezbollah movement was basically acting, on its own, outside the existing Lebanese system.[161] Hezbollah had its own representatives in Parliament but none in the Cabinet of Ministers. The Hezbollah movement openly rejected the Lebanese political system in order to preserve its role as national Islamic resistance, acting only within the sphere of the Shiite community and running for municipality elections.[162] Gradually,

161 Good examples of means to challenge government politics were in those years, when demonstrations where staged in the suburbs against the high price of life in 1993 and 2004. Both demonstrations have been bloodily repressed by the national security forces in an incongruous action taken by the Syrian arbiter in Lebanon and Hezbollah ally.

162 The intra-communitarian Shiite clashes at the end of the civil war between Amal and Hezbollah has to be read under the same perspective. It represented a fight for the predominance within the community, but Hezbollah did not mingle in fights with other confessional militias, in order to preserve itself for the fight against Israel.

the Hezbollah movement became involved in Lebanese consociational democracy, almost completely integrating into the political system by 2005, during *Intifada al-Istiqlal*. At this time, one of its representatives joined the Cabinet of Najib Mikati's transition government and even more clearly, when the movement joined Fuad Siniora's Cabinet in August 2005. More specifically, the framework of our study takes into consideration the recent dynamics of community public sphere. It is necessary to consider Hezbollah as completely involved in the national public sphere, now becoming one of the actors in the Lebanese consociational system and as a consequence, lost its external role as challenge to the state.

Aside from these considerations, our case study, as different from other nearby countries, the religious/confessional affiliation is an essential key to citizenship. In other countries, even with a predominant Muslim majority, citizenship emanates from a direct affiliation to the state and not on a confessional basis. This condition on receiving citizenship in Lebanon is critically challenged by certain communities or individuals, but specifically by secular movements and individuals that cannot find a way to have access to the public sphere within this context. Such a critical stance comes from the difficulty those actors find in attempting to find a space within a public sphere and system that reserve major offices and Parliamentary seats for confessional affiliations.

In order to pose our empirical questions, we have to consider the institutional and constitutional realities of Lebanon. In Lebanon, there is no official state religion, but the political system demands a confessional affiliation in order to enjoy complete political rights. Such conditions tend to cast religion as one of the main actors in the public sphere. As an alternative, followers of the secular option cast religion in the private sphere. What kind of role can secular/national communal individuals have within the community public sphere if they reject their public communal affiliation?

By the same definition of the system, religious representatives represent an authority within the community due to the power given them by the political system in place to formally rule on family law issues.

With regard to religion, it should be noted that it has a strong presence in the national public sphere, especially in terms of visibility and identity. Religion, or confession, represents a social mark in terms of relationship dynamics and helps to create stereotypes of the other. This is useful in order to create an identity for the interlocutors. The presence of religion in the public sphere has been represented by a Cross and a Crescent in order to display the unity of the Lebanese people during the Independence Uprising of 2005. On the second anniversary of Rafik Hariri's assassination, at 12:55, the moment of the murder, the bells representing Christianity and the Muslim call for prayer were simultaneous. In the collective Lebanese imagination, religion is the glue that holds the nation together. Religious figures are public national actors that sometimes take a clear side in the national political struggle and sometimes are working to reach a consensus between different factions within the same community. Religious figures and communitarian institutions release weekly statements on the political situation or they arrange meetings with political personalities that are useful in explaining their position and tend to influence the stance of the members of their own community. At the same time, the relationship between religious figures and politicians is such that the former are useful to the latter in order to gain a sort of legitimacy in the national public sphere and toward their communal members. A representative example of the role of religious figures in public political affairs is exemplified by the behaviour of Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir. The role of the Patriarch is seen as emblematic but also needs to be put within the framework of the internal Lebanese struggle for the election of a new President of the Republic, a place reserved for a Maronite Christian. On the eve of the struggle for the Parliamentary seat that was

to replace murdered minister Pierre Gemayel, the Patriarch implicitly gave his support for the candidate of the majority, Amin Gemayel against the Free Patriotic Movement candidate, Michel Aoun, Michel Khury.[163] As another example, in a debate on the election of the new President of the Republic, Patriarch Sfeir opted to play a more placid role, that of the intermediary for a consensus candidate between the Christians factions. At the same time, Patriarch Sfeir has been recognized by other main national figures that were discussing the election of the new President of the Republic, as the natural interlocutor and representative of the Maronite community. The examples displayed here, detail the porous boundaries between formal authorities directly elected by the Lebanese population, and informal authorities that assume their power as religious representatives of the communities.

In order to refer back to our specific case, it is necessary to question the role of religious figures within the community sphere and the kind of authority they are given. As informal authorities acting in a communitarian sphere that grants them power on certain communal institutions, how can communal individuals hold them accountable? Considering that the community sphere is out of the control of the state, how can communal individuals challenge such religious figures in the case they are acting authoritarian? Can religious movements in Lebanon, acting within the community sphere, have a reflex on the expansion of the public sphere? Religion is directly marking the third factor that should be taken into consideration in studying the divide of public and private: the community.

163 See: Taylor, L. (2007, August 26). Church and State. With presidential elections drawing near, the Maronite Church is once again at the center of Lebanese politics. *NowLebanon*. Accessed August 27, 2007.

E. Public, Private and Community

The communities taken into consideration in this study are characterized by their confessional markers. These institutional communities consist of individuals sharing the same confessional faith. The Lebanese system is made up of associations of heterogeneous groups or communities and takes the form of a consensual system. This consensual system tries to involve all the different communities in the most important decisions regarding the politics of the state. Eickelman and Salvatore introduce a definition of public sphere that leads us to expand the dichotomy of public and private to include a third term, the community. The concept of community is a crucial factor in our case study. According to Eickelman and Salvatore, the public sphere is:

> "The site where contest take place over the definition of common good, and also of the virtues, obligations and rights that members of the society require for the common good to be realized. This emergent sense of public goes hand-in-hand with the sharing of norms that define ideas of community and the responsibilities of those who belong to it" (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004, p. 4).

The term community can be used in general reference to the political community of citizens within a state. Another meaning of the term community can more broadly refer to individuals sharing habits, ideas, practices or a particular well-defined space. In the case of Lebanon, and more specifically the analysis of the Lebanese community sphere, the term community makes reference to a similar double realm. On one side, we can address the national political community that is organized around the state institutions and the political system. On the other side, Lebanon is organized as a multi-communal state where nineteen communities are institutionally recognized, and as a consequence, are granted a political

quota in the national Parliament. They manage their own members' personal status laws, permitting them to have their own schools and educational institutions. Therefore, we assumed at the beginning of this study that such prerogatives make of the Lebanese communities political entities.

It is also possible to define the Lebanese communities as socio-religious communities. The religious mark, or better said the confessional mark, is the frame of reference for the distinction. For this reason, the Kurds are not recognized as a community, but who rather are seen as naturalized under the Sunni community. The same can be said for the Palestinians. Naturalized Palestinian, for the most part, fell under the Sunni community, or if of a Christian confession, often the Greek Orthodox community. Another illustrative case is that of the Armenians, who can be defined as an ethnic community, due to their own language, are distinguished from other Lebanese communities, and instead are split down a confessional line: Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Protestant and Armenian Catholic. These considerations encourage us to use the term ethnic for the Lebanese case, with moderation. We said that Lebanese communities could be defined as socio-religious communities. Each of these communities share common habits and histories and in certain cases, they also have a specific territory of residence or a language. But what makes them more closely resemble sociological communities is their institutional recognition and the autonomy the system is granting them. Communities' institutions rule on their members in terms of personal status; they have informal leaders and due to the political quotas, represent a political sphere for community representation toward the state and other communities.

It is for this reason, that we assume a crucial assumption in our study; that the Lebanese state is composed of multiple community spheres complementary to the national political community. Each of these communities represents a cluster of the general Lebanese public sphere and a public

sphere by itself.

The words of Eickelman introduced the community factor in the divide public/private, as well as two alternative sides: the divide public and community, and the concept of "sharing norms" and "responsibilities." Both these considerations will be useful in approaching the analysis of our case study. Furthermore, concerning the divide public/community, Eickelman tends to use both terms of public and community as belonging to the same realm. However, the form from which Nancy Fraser approaches the terms community and public is in an antithetic way as:

> "Meanwhile the concept of "community" suggests a bounded and fairly homogeneous group, and it often connotes consensus, the concept of "public", in contrast, emphasizes discursive interaction that is in principle unbounded and open-ended, and this in turn implies a plurality of perspectives. Thus, the idea of a public can accommodate internal differences, antagonisms and debates better than that of a community" (Fraser, 1992, p. 127).

It is necessary to take this idea in moderation and consider the qualifiers of this consideration, but its results are useful for our aim. What Fraser emphasizes is the intrinsic opposition in terms of differences and consensus between the concepts of public and that of community. Furthermore, Fraser underscores the issue of the accommodation of internal differences, which will be crucial to our study. The supposed opposition between the terms public and community needs to be carefully analyzed. Eickelman and Salvatore use the term community to refer more specifically to the *umma*, the community of believers within the framework of a Muslim majority society. According to Eickelman and Salvatore, the public is the place for shared anticipation, borrowing this idea from Dewey and Elias,

> "The state or the community also acts to regulate or to limits certain actions of individual if these actions threaten the community. The public sphere entails awareness among members of a society that discrete acts have a general impacts on others...Shared anticipation is the condition of possibility of a public sphere. The emergence of the public coincides here with the opening up of the circles of reciprocity and mutual obligations" (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004, pp. 7-10).

All of these authors share the concepts that the community is the place for consensus; as well as being the place of "sharing norms" "responsibilities" and "shared anticipation" The difference between "public" and "community" is not a place for confrontation or accommodation of differences.

We assume that the divide public/community cannot be seen as a dichotomy or as a consequence of the peculiar Lebanese system that creates institutional multiple publics. Concerning the national political community, either the individual or the community act in the public sphere, while within the community sphere, it is the individual that is the segment of reference. It is necessary to add that the individual in Lebanon has no formal right to "leave" the political community from where he belongs, as community belonging is necessary for being granted citizenship in the Lebanese system.[164] If we assume the community is based on "sharing norms" and "responsibilities," could these preconditions block forms of dissention within the community sphere? Is the Lebanese community a place for criticism and dissention, conditions that suppose a development and extension of the public sphere?

To better address these questions, we can introduce other considerations of the ideas of community, internal differences and the broad concept of plurality. Iris Marion Young, with a perception similar to

164 The Lebanese individual instead is free to convert to another confession and to thus change communal affiliation.

the previously mentioned authors, analyzed the concept of community within the framework of liberal democracies, with a special focus on multicultural spaces, like the city:

> "The term community refers to the people with whom one identifies in a specific locale. It refers to neighborhood, church, schools. It also carries connotations of ethnicity, race, and other group identifications. For most people, insofar as they consider themselves members of communities at all, a community is a group that shares a specific heritage, a common self-identification, a common culture and set of norms" (Young, 1990, pp. 234-235).

However Young is also adding another critical point to the ideal of community. Young also exposes the possible negative connotation of the ideal of community, and its homogeneous implications.

> "The ideal of communities denies the differences between subjects and the social differentiation of temporal and spatial distancing. The most serious political consequences of the desire for community, or for co-presence and mutual identification with others, is that it often operates to exclude or oppress those experienced as different. Commitment to an ideal of community tends to value and enforce homogeneity" (Young, 1990, p. 234).

What makes her idea so appealing is that Young is proposing a positive idea of group and she appeals to consider the different forms existing within the groups. Although arguing against the ideal of community as a normative model of social organization that denies the differences between the subject and their social differentiation, Young definitely suggests the adoption of a positive idea of group and relationships of group solidarity. In her view, based on her experience within the feminist movement, "those affirming the specificity of a group affinity should at

the same time recognize and affirm the group and individual differences within the group" (Young, 1990, p. 236). A positive sense of group or community that can entail internal differences appears even better than the one that denies the differences in the name of homogeneity.

Two final issues can be extrapolated from Young's considerations. Lebanon is institutionally sanctioning, through its own political system, the idea and the acceptance of diversity and plurality, exemplified by the official recognition of nineteen communities that act in the national public sphere. Is also the community public sphere characterized by diversity and plurality? Arendt's suggestions are also useful concerning the idea of plurality. Arendt is considering plurality as a human condition and she considers that the attempt to eliminate it equivalent to the abolition of the same public sphere (Arendt, 2005 [1958], p. 162). On the other hand, there is another factor that characterizes the Lebanese communities that we can relate to the question of the internal differences: the role of the community as intermediary between the individual and the state.

Habermas, in his enquiry on the public sphere, is taking into consideration the role of the private associations, the political parties and mass-media, which all can be considered intermediaries between the individual and the state. Habermas is adding the consideration that, in order to have a public sphere organized with a democratic formation of opinions and wills, these intermediary clusters need to be organized following the principles of the public sphere in their internal structures and suppress obstacles to communication and public debate (Habermas, 2005 [1962], p. 241). Considering the intermediary role of Lebanese communities, are they also characterized by the principles of the public sphere in their internal structure? More concretely, is there an open public sphere within the Lebanese communities? Is the community a space for free action and public debate on community life?

These questions push us to look more closely at these multiple clusters

of public and considering that some of the Lebanese communities are characterized by territorial homogeneity, to the idea of public space.

F. Multiple Publics: Counterpublics and Public Space

1. Counterpublics

This section begins with the assumption, drawn from Calhoun, that in any society it is possible to find multiple publics. In this case study these several publics coincide with the various Lebanese communities. Assuming the latter, the presence of other multiple publics is not denied, especially in relation to specific social groups; but for the analyzed case, the multiple publics will be equivocated to the confessional communities. Considering the previous distinction made between multiple publics and the public sphere, the national public will be considered as one of these publics though in a different position, leaving open questions that will be raised here. The public sphere in Lebanon is the sum of all these multiple publics. It is necessary to look at the literature on the idea of multiple publics in order to highlight some important issues. Fraser, for example, prefers dealing with multiple public spheres, rather than one single public, especially in fragmented societies. According to Fraser, "a multiplicity of publics is preferable to a single public sphere both in stratified societies and egalitarian societies" (Fraser, 1992, pp. 136-137). The existence of places and societies where multiple publics are institutionally sanctioned should be emphasized. This case study represents an example of such a possibility; the analysis of these multiple publics is required, due to the presence of different communities in Lebanon. The presence of multiple publics, that Fraser calls "subaltern counter-publics", entails the idea of parallel discursive arenas. Fraser also promotes such an ideal, because these

multiple publics can have a contestable function (Fraser, 1992, p. 123). It is more relevant to focus on a plurality of public spheres, rather than on Habermas' idea of a single public sphere. Even more preferable than the ideal advanced by Fraser, is Craig Calhoun argument concerning the possibility of multiple publics. For any such "clusters", Calhoun suggests, "it is necessary to consider how they are internally organized" (Calhoun, 1992, p. 38). It is therefore important to consider multiple publics and, in particular, their internal organization, something that was neglected by Habermas in the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas was more concerned, in terms of the analysis of internal structures, with the intermediary more than the idea of multiple publics.

These general assumptions help raise some interrogative on this specific case. While opting for multiple publics, Fraiser underlines the contestable function of what she calls "subaltern counter-publics". Considering the case at hand, it is necessary to enquire if the communities under analysis hold a contestable function and could therefore be labelled as subaltern. The term of reference Fraser uses in order to delineate her thoughts is directly related to a clear term of reference these subaltern publics have, the state or a majority. With regards to this case study, it is worth noting that it could be difficult to find such clear terms of reference. On one side, in Lebanon there is no clear majority and, on the other side, the State is represented generally as the gathering of representatives of each community. All these Lebanese communities are part of the system, if we do not take into consideration groups that are not recognized as such which are not part of the study to begin with. As part of the system, all the Lebanese communities compete for a portion in the power-sharing; however, it is difficult to consider them as in opposition to the State or to a majority that is not possible to locate, if not on a national political level. The official balance is either between the three major communities or between the Christians and the Muslims. In a way, these publics are loosing their

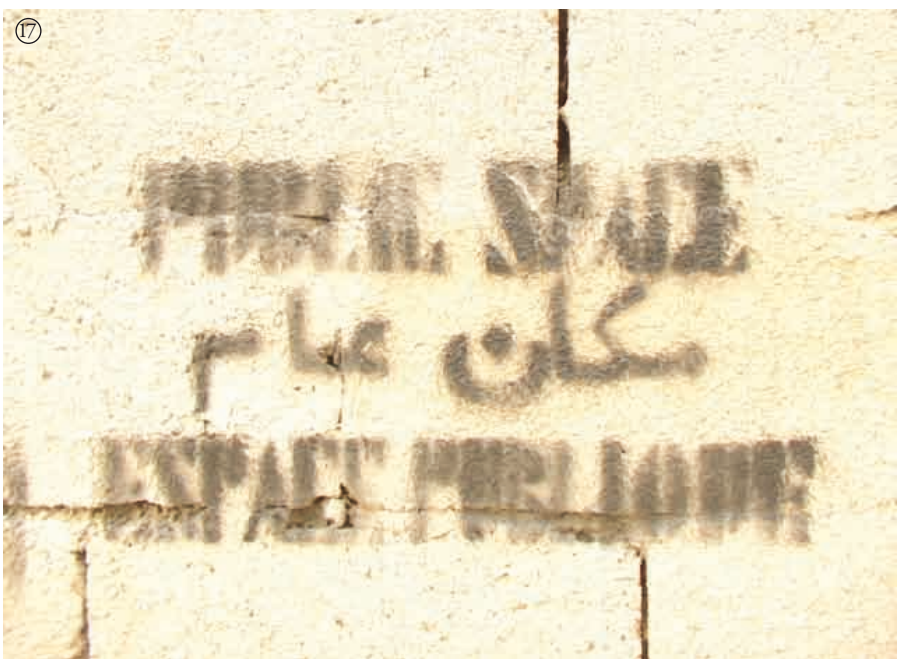
contestant function. It is necessary to raise some interrogatives on the relationship between these multiple communal publics and the national sphere. At first glance, it seems they are grounded on different dynamics. While the former are based on the ability of the community to represent on the national level, the latter seems to be moving in the other direction. Representation, as such with the main goal of bringing back more power than they can gather from the national sphere. These considerations enable us to pose empirical questions concerning the relationship between national and communal publics. Is the national public in a position of hegemony with respect to the communal publics? In other terms, is the national public influencing the community sphere and does it depend on the dynamics of the national sphere?

Fraser, opting for multiple publics, is also raising another issue that we are going to analyze in the next paragraph. Taking into consideration fragmented societies, Fraser is affirming that the contestant function of these counterpublics, characterized by a "publicist orientation", mitigates against separatism, and by definition, assuming a publicist orientation. The notion of several publics helps to avoid the issue of separatism, through a dialogue between the different publics, which Fraser calls "inter-public relations" (Fraser, 1992, p. 124). It is possible to consider Fraser's assumptions in relationships with our case, either from a physical perspective or from a political one, and then to move the focus to the idea of public space.

2. Public Space

On May 30, 2007 the U.N. Security Council was going to vote to approve the creation of the international tribunal to judge Hariri's assassination. As usual, Beirut's streets were empty, due also in part to the new battle within the Nahr el Bared Palestinian Camp and the various

bombs that exploded in Beirut in the previous days. At the time, Riad el Sohl Square was residence to the opposition, who established a sit-in camp on December 1, 2006. In order to pass through the sit-in camp, it is necessary to stop at one of the checkpoints patrolled by members of the opposition dressed in civil clothing. Sometimes they check bags for security reasons, and they can decide to forbid entrance to anyone they consider a threat. While walking through the desert surroundings of the camp, characterized by many empty tents, graffiti on a construction site in Saifi, a high-class area in Downtown Beirut, reads: "makan3am, public space, espace publique." Twenty meters away, the fence patrolled by Lebanese soldiers divides the opposition camp and Martyrs' Square, the informal "propriety" of the March 14th bloc, where Hariri's mausoleum is located. Public space? Espace public? Makan3am? For whom? What is public? On one hand, individuals that do not belong to State ranks



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established checkpoints in Downtown Beirut and, in certain cases, ask for identification, with the ultimate power to permit or forbid access. On the other hand, people have the power to decide that former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's mausoleum be placed in the square of Downtown, which was reconstructed after the war by a private company belonging to the same former Prime Minister now buried there.

The above anecdote sheds light on the vague boundaries of "public" in Lebanon, which opens up a forum for discussion on personal freedoms and the politicization/fragmentation of physical space. Physical space has always been considered the place where freedom is possible, or where it is possible to materially participate in political life (Arendt, 2007 [1963], p. 269).

The street represents the public space par excellence. In Lebanon, it is possible to consider the street from different perspectives. On one hand, the street represents the space of the state par excellence. However, the congenital weakness of the Lebanese state shaped by the multi-communal political system, was previously emphasized. The weakness of the state is also transparent due to its presence in the street. Regulations are the most visually impacting factors. The absence of a trustworthy regulation system is magnified by overwhelming numbers of "State" signs versus several "private" signs, definitely leading to the consideration of the streets as the realm of *fawda*, anarchy. The inconsistency of construction regulations has resulted in the invasion of public space by half-constructed buildings situated without urban planning considerations. State presence is located in small, historical, "neutral" spaces such as ancient historical ruins, such as those located in Downtown Beirut, Baalbeck, Tyre and Sidon. Even less historic ruins, in themselves present issues of communal belonging that are of great concern to the various interpretations of Lebanese history. The poor public transportation system is also a visible example of weak public state policy, again calling attention to the absence of the

State in the street. The installation of flash cameras at traffic lights in 2006, and the placement of parking meters in Beirut central areas in 2007 astonished most as a sign of the State in the street. A few months later, the uselessness of these regulating devices was clear as the Lebanese people reclaimed the street "jungle".


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The control of public space by the weak Lebanese State has two visual consequences. On one hand, the absence of rule makes of public space a jungle where individuals can express their hard-line individualism. On the hand, congenital State absence is indirectly granting power to communities that use the street as both a weapon in the political struggle and as a demarcating line of territory.

On an individualistic level, the overwhelming number of "private" signs on the street show the mercantile face of society. The Jounieh "autostrade" is a clear example of the invasion of public space by advertisement

billboards. Thirty-meter-tall depictions of Nancy Ajram compete for street space with twenty-meter-tall bottles of Almaza beer, amongst hundreds of smaller billboards advertising pharmacies, restaurants, malls…all of which come close to covering traffic signs. The smartest billboard advertisements play on the situation within the country, creating a humorous environment that also serves to remind the Lebanese of their daily, political troubles.[165] The most productive time for Lebanese advertisers was, without-a-doubt, in the aftermath of the July war. Banks were bidding against one another for bridge-reconstruction projects and were advertising with references to destruction and consequent reconstruction. The lack of gasoline was referred to by whiskey brands, and many bank advertisements offered gasoline prizes for people opening new accounts. The role of the Lebanese army during the Nahr el Bared battle was cel-

165 During the Independence Uprising of 2005, many advertisements that reproduced the Lebanese flag appeared in celebration of the revolution.

ebrated with the issuing of a credit card with Army colours.

Advertising campaigns and billboards were also used as a space of confrontation in the national political struggle between the two blocks that were contending for power within the country after *Intifada al-Istiqlal*. Hezbollah marked the end of the Summer 2006 war by filling all the billboards on the main road from Beirut to the South with images of the resistance under the slogan "Divine Victory". The 14th of March bloc debuted the "I LOVE LIFE" campaign in December 2006 using billboard space throughout Lebanon to promote the tri-lingual slogan; the campaign was an implicit attack on Hezbollah's ideal of martyrdom.[166] The opposition responded by mocking the posh style of the 14th of March's campaign; the same slogans were reproduced with the addition of graffiti tagged slogans asking for dignity. The expensive campaigns satiated all the streets of Lebanon. Furthermore, it need be mentioned that some third factions, outside of the polarity between the opposition and pro-government factions, also attempted to voice their opinion though without real success.[167]

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166 For an interesting interpretation of the campaigns see: Deeb, L. (2007). Louder than Bombs. *Middle East Report*, N°242.

167 At the beginning of 2006, several billboards appeared around Lebanon advertising the "11th of March" bloc; the "Lubnani w Bass" (Just Lebanese) campaign was also launched around the same.

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A brief analysis of two social spaces in Beirut highlights specific issues concerning the idea of public and the concept of social accessibility. The two spaces of importance are the *corniche* and Downtown Beirut. The *corniche* represents the most accessible and inclusive public space in Beirut and perhaps the whole of Lebanon. Individuals from different classes, confessions and ages are able to gather on the shore of the Mediterranean. Fishermen, skater-boarders, people playing football, running, drinking coffee, families, hijab, cleavage, plastic noses, all share the homogeneous *corniche*.

Until 2005, Downtown Beirut was the "face" of post-war reconstruction, which made it a place for the rich and consequently inaccessible to the majority of the population.[168] Downtown Beirut, site of the Parliament and United Nations buildings, was a stage for the *khaligis*, Arabs from the Gulf, coming to vacation in Beirut in search of liberal behaviour in expensive restaurants and cafés of the city centre. Such became of Downtown Beirut–the previous centre of the capital before the civil war, full of theatres, cinemas and cheap hotels. The heavily debated issue of the reconstruction of Downtown Beirut is symptomatic of the change of the space.[169] The State awarded the reconstruction project to Solidere, a company owned by former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, The conflict between public, here understood as state-related or belonging to all the Lebanese, and private, represented by actors directly involved in the political national realm, exemplify the blurring of boundaries between the public and private. For example, permission from Solidere, not the government, is required in order to take pictures of buildings in Downtown Beirut or of the abandoned synagogue. Such is also the case of Bir el

168 Harb analyzed Downtown Beirut in terms of accessibility. See, Harb, M. (2007). Un urbanisme qui rassemble. *L'avenir en points d'interrogation. Supplément de L'Orient-Le Jour paru le lundi 26 mars 2007,* 122-123.
169 See: Kassir, S. (2003). *Histoire de Beyrouth.* Paris : Fayard.

Abed, Hezbollah's security zone in Beirut's suburbs where, after the war, a pass was required for entrance. Lebanese police and Solidere's private security agency that surveys the property constantly patrol the city centre. It is important to mention that Solidere's security guards control bags and identity cards of timorous citizens.

The events that occurred in the aftermath of Rafik Hariri's assassination in 2005, provoked several changes in the country have greatly shaped and changed Downtown Beirut. In addition to the class divide mentioned earlier, the events of 2005 created a divide based on political affiliation with consequences on communal belonging. The huge demonstrations of spring 2005 divided the space of Downtown. The division was due in part to the burial of Hariri in Martyrs' Square, near the monumental mosque; the surrounding are is heavily decorated with the insignia of the Future Movement, Hariri's political party.

On one side of Downtown, the so-called anti-Syrian demonstrations were taking place in Martyrs' Square. Images of Lebanese youth climbing the statue of the Martyrs in the name of freedom were dispersed around the globe. On the other side of the city centre, the so-called pro-Syrian coalition decided to take as its stage the Riad el Sohl Square, not far from Martyrs' Square and facing the U.N. buildings. Month after month the partition of Downtown Beirut became a reality; it was definitely consecrated on December 1st 2006, with the establishment of a no-end sit-in bring down the Siniora government.[170]

As a consequence of the political deadlock and the sectarian clashes in the beginning of 2007, public streets were tagged in a confessional/communal way. More than ever before, the streets became places for flags, shrines, graffiti and posters, all markings of the place's political affiliation. At the same time, the space went under the control of the various factions

170 On May 4, 2006 the demonstration staged by the opposition in the Beirut city center marked the first clear division of the space.

as well as hired private security agencies. According to Messarra, the street, that represents the public space par excellence, was filled with "affichages religieux sauvages impose aux passants des idéaux et des représentations. La rue devient propriété exclusive du régime et des gouvernants" (Messarra, 2003, p. 303).

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Such evolution of the public space, especially in the Ras Beirut area, led to a discussion of the community strongholds that are reminiscent of the civil war years, when each of the fighting factions and communities had their own strongholds where they ruled outside of State control. According to many authors, the consequences of attempting to homogenize the territorial spaces of different communities are sectarian cleansing and the cleansing of the internal dissent within the same territory (Traboulsi, 2007, pp. 233-238). Such conditions suggested the creation of states within the state (Hanf, 1993, p. 166) or a kind of communitarian totalitarianism, which some authors consider believe is still present in certain cases (Corm, 2005, pp. 212-213).


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The comparison with the almost institutionalization of cantons during the civil war and the situation of tension and "retribalization" that occurred

in the years after Rafik Hariri's assassination, suggest some empirical questions on the openness of the space of the communities as a reflection of the conditions of the physical space. What effects do the national political tension and the forms of public space have on the possible expressions of dissent by communal individuals within the community sphere? Are predominant groups in a certain space exercising pressure on their members? Can communal individuals freely act and express their views in a space informally controlled by a group or a communal faction?

G. Swinging Between Civil and Communitarian Society

1. Civil Society or National Society?

A notion that has often been resembled to the public sphere is that of civil society. While some authors underlined their distinction, others tended to conflate them as belonging to the same realm. The notion of civil society is usually defined using Western terms and liberal political theory. The purpose of this study does not require an in depth analysis of such an issue though it is necessary to consider the distinction, especially when considering applying the term "civil society" to aspects of the society under analysis.

National daily newspapers in Lebanon use the term civil society to denote the web of civil associations and organization. The members of such organizations use the term to define themselves – in their actions and statements – as representatives of the broad civil society. The general use of the term civil society is a common practice in Lebanon. A poignant example comes from the Freedom Camp that was established in Martyrs' Square in Spring 2005. The camp was subdivided into participating groups, mostly youth members of the equivalent Lebanese parties that

had an anti-occupational agenda and were lobbying for the end of Syrian occupation in Lebanon. One of the tents was labelled the "Civil Society Tent," *al-mujtama al-madani*, and was basically comprised of individuals that did not strictly belong to any national parties.[171] The self-distinction of the "Civil Society Tent" from the other groups characterized by overt political ties, suggests that they could propose an approach other than that exhausted by national parties. As in politics the major cleavage in terms of political party is between different confessions, the distinction in term of civil society could follow the same rules. The discussion is basically played in Lebanon around this issue, that concern the belonging or not to the civil society of those groups that are based on a communal or confessional bases.

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171 See: Gahre, C. (2007). Staging the Lebanese Nation: Urban Public Space and Political Mobilization in the Aftermath of Hariri's Assassination. Thesis (M.A.)--American University of Beirut, Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies. For a critical reading of the performance of the so-called Lebanese civil society during the Independence Uprising, see: Saghieh, N. (2006). Intifada d'indépendance: Et pourtant on a fait taire la justice! *L'espoir en lettres de sang. Supplément de L'Orient- Le Jour paru le lundi 13 février 2006*, 92. ; Ghamroun, S. (2006). 14 mars et société civile: symbioses dangereuses. *L'espoir en lettres de sang. Supplément de L'Orient- Le Jour paru le lundi 13 février 2006*, 116.

Organizations and individuals that define themselves as civil society groups are basically suggesting that their approach is civic, that the group is inter-confessional, and that affiliation is voluntary. At the same time, personal experience suggests that the boundaries between civil, inter-confessional society and kinship or community affiliation are not necessarily dichotomized in reality.[172] It is without a doubt that in the Middle East, Lebanon is amongst the states with the most vibrant sphere of civil society action. Organizations in Lebanon engage almost all social fields, from environmental issues to civil rights, from women associations to child care, to only name a few. This web of organizations undoubtedly shapes the Lebanese public sphere, although there are some necessary interrogatives with regards to the organization' actions and the real influence they have in shaping the public sphere. The issues that need to be addressed concern the real effectiveness of their actions and the relations of the individuals that comprise them to the political realm and to community belonging. Criticism of Lebanese civil society stems from its deep fragmentation, competition and cooptation by the main political/confessional actors.[173] The possibility of cooperation on specific issues is often undermined due to intense competition amongst the clusters of the vibrant web.[174] Action is taking place though its public-ness is not so evident. Members meet in

172 For example, one of the main promoters of the "Civil Society Tent" is strictly related to Gemayel family. Such promoter publicly supported Gemayel in occasion of Metn by-election of August 2007.

173 The main Lebanese workers syndicates are extremely fragmented nowadays. They have either been co-opted or established by the main political actors, making them mere tools for "street pressure" in the political arena. For information on the political polarization of the Lebanese syndicates see: Corm, G. (2005). *Le Liban contemporain. Histoire et société*. Paris: Editions La Découverte. (Original work published 2003); Kiwan, F. (1993). The Formation of Lebanese Civil Society. *Beirut* Review, No. 6.

174 The self-criticism of Lebanese civil society activist Ziad Baroud is noteworthy in Baroud, Z. (2007). L'avenir conjugué au...passé. *L'avenir en points d'interrogation. Supplément de L'Orient- Le Jour paru le lundi 26 mars 2007*, 71.

public places and organize events that, most of the time, remain closed-off in a niche and serve to basically propagate the organizations. There is no doubt that the Habermasian public sphere emerges in the various forums of public debate on the construction of the state or on the awareness of the reconstruction, that usually take place in clubs, cafés or bars. This condition closely resembles the romanticized Lebanon of the years before the civil war, when Beirut – especially Ras Beirut – represented a safe heaven for all the political dissidents of the Arab world, making of bars and cafes places of political discussion and opposition to tyrannical governmental rule.[175]

Civil marriage and the possibility for individuals to enjoy civil laws regulating personal status are amongst the most impressive campaigns undertaken by the Lebanese civil society, as they were the cases that directly challenged the political system from its basis. However, the other actions of the groups do not often challenging the system or the usual political representatives; rather they take the shape of compromise and remission.[176]

Can the national civil society really attain long-term objectives in the multi-communal Lebanese system, or is its job just to bring awareness to issues that do not directly engage the core of the Lebanese system and its informal clusters? Can the interaction between kinship, community and

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175 See the documentary produced by the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, under the direction of Samir Khalaf. See also, Khalaf, S. (2002). *Civil and uncivil violence in Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press.

176 For example, the association Khalas!, established in 2007, which lobbies for peace has stated directly that it addresses the "political decision-makers." Such a position directly implies the acceptance of the usual political actors that are arguably leading Lebanon to the brings of war. See, http://www.khalass.net/. Such a position invokes what Corm discussed with regards to demonstrations during the civil war: that demonstrations for peace did not advanced any criticism of militias and community leaders. See: Corm, G. (2005). *Le Liban contemporain. Histoire et société*. Paris : Editions La Découverte. (Original work published 2003), pp. 216-217.

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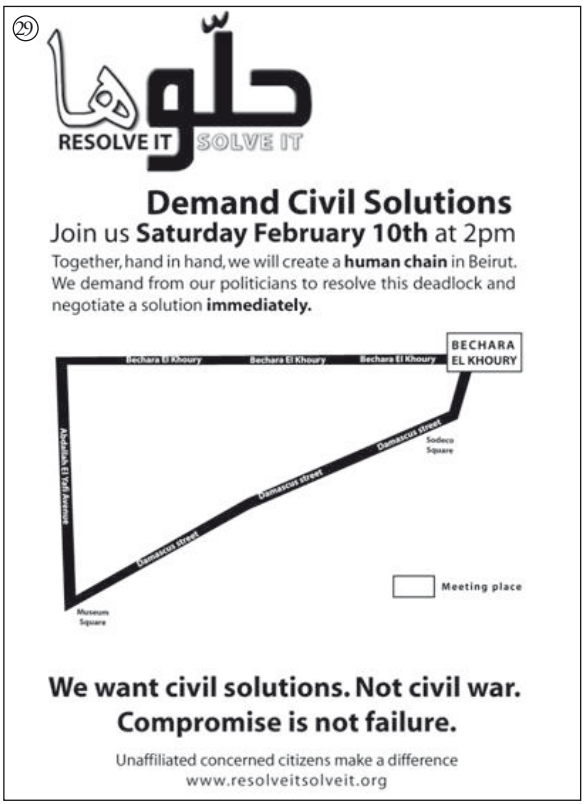

civil society be useful in the extension of the Lebanese public sphere, or does it just serving the status quo? Does the auto-proclaimed "civil society" merit this label, or is it simply a "national society"?

2. The Communitarian Society

In political theory, especially from a liberal Western perspective, an emphasis is placed on the difference between organizations based on voluntary affiliation and those in which membership is based on ethnic or tribal familial ties. In fact, a condition for civil society has often been

the absence of non-voluntary ties such as kinship and confessionalism. According to Kiwan, in Lebanon there has always been an attempt to differentiate between the "société communautaire," *moujtama'a ahli*, which is grounded on non-elected ties, such as kinship, clan or confessional ties, and the "société civile," *moujtama'a madani*, which is characterized by voluntary affiliation (Kiwan, 2003). However Kiwan criticizes the dichotomy that has been always affirmed between the two kind of affiliation, as being always presented in antithetic terms, considering their role vis a vis the state and as a tool for the extension of the broad meaning of civil society (Kiwan, 2003). The latter observation may help suggest empirical questions later in this section.

The web of organizations in communitarian societies is identified as CBO, Community Based Organizations (Salam, 2002), or FBO, Faith Based Organization (CRTDA report). Not much scholarly focus has been given to the influence of communitarian organizations on the extension of the public sphere or its role in challenging the political system and its actors. Authors that did engage such issues questioned whether such organizations in fact belonged to civil society (Salam, 2002, pp. 15-16); however, they did not take into consideration whether such associations pertained to the public sphere, or if they worked towards its extension. Eickelman, whose work is focused on religious based organization in predominately Muslim societies, proposes another perspective by suggesting that "such forms of religiously motivated charitable and service associations involve an intricate web of informational and expressive transactions, which are constitutive of the public sphere" (Eickelman and Salvatore, 20024 p. 14).

Messarra criticizes the strict division between what "popular organizations" and "civil society", assuming that such popular organization, *mujtama' ahli* "assurent ou pouvant assurer des fonctions civiles, quant à leur autonomie par rapport a l'appareil gouvernemental et a l'exercice de fonctions régulatrices pour le développement et la démocratie" (Messarra,

2003, p. 364). In addition to the conditions of autonomy and independence, Van der Veer adds that that independence from the state is necessary in order to be critical of it (Van der Veer, 2004, p. 29). Autonomy, independence and criticism are important factors for civil society and so-called communitarian society.

The mentioned factors seem to restructure accepted definitions, allowing for the postulation of some important empirical questions. Are these kind of endowments mentioned by Eickelman and Salvatore autonomous vis-à-vis the state? Since this study specifically focuses on the community sphere, are communal organizations autonomous from communitarian institutions and other informal communal authorities in the Lebanese case? Do they challenge the state as well as communitarian authorities and institutions? Do they develop a critical, autonomous character that enables genuine individual participation? If so, towards whom is the critical stance directed? Are they autonomous of the State? In order to fully actualize their role, do they also have to be autonomous of community institutions and informal authorities? Do they exercise freedom of expression and association within the community? In relation to a public space that is outside the State's control? Does the same liberalization that makes Lebanon one of the most vibrant public spheres in the Middle East exist on a communitarian level? Does this type of popular activism exist autonomously from unofficial communal authorities?

These questions incite further questioning regarding the different available forms of participation. Are the activities proposed by associations, institutions and endowments that are linked to authorities or personal interest groups necessary to consider? Is the idea of autonomy from power and political authorities an important factor? Do all forms of activism really lead to an empowerment of the individual that is essential to the public sphere? Who is really acting to empower the communal individual within the community, and not to endorse private interests?

Dawahare is clear on this issue:

> "Arendt puts forward a theory of empowerment, insisting on the redemptive power of political association and public participation. Arendt lauds all form of ground-level popular mobilization as having the potential to set up a public space in which political action can flourish. Its legitimacy and power has to be found at the scale of the local and the particular" (Dawahare, 2000).

3. Community's Institutions

As mentioned in the previous chapter, by right of articles 9 and 10 of the Constitution of Autonomy, communities are permitted to have their own educational institutions and maintain their own personal status law vis-à-vis the members of the community.

The official community institution is the *majilis* – the community council. The *majilis* normally assembles the most important religious and laic figures of the community. It is necessary to mention that not all the Lebanese communities have a *majilis*, or at least a functioning one, thus dividing power amongst different authorities. *Majilis al Shiyya*, *Dar el Fatwa*, and the Maronite Council are the most representative community councils. The head of the council is normally invested with a certain public authority on either a communal or national level. Consequently, it would seem that the reference point for the communal individuals on issues of personal status would be such a communal institute. The state does not interfere with internal changes in personal status. Besides main institutions, what was previously defined as communitarian society, such as schools, hospitals, and charitable organizations, have been entitled to government funding in certain cases. According to Joseph, through such practices the "Lebanese state has helped construct the very 'communities' it has assumed to have an existence prior to itself, thus constituting the

state as a nation of sub-national patriarchal communities defined by religious sect" (Joseph, 1997, p. 83). This condition grants the community autonomy vis-à-vis the state, and it is thus outside of state control.[177]

Members of the community cannot avoid dealing with community institutions when it comes to issues concerning their personal status. Religious institutions have a strong influence on the political system and on the same national and communal audience (Kiwan, 1993); it is important to also bear in mind that the same religious institutions also possess some of the most important, national educational institutes.

Another issue strictly related to community's institutions is the administration of the *waqf*–the propriety of the communities. The *waqf* was established as an important public institution during the Ottoman Empire, since it functioned on the basis of autonomous powers and initiatives (Gerber, 2004, pp. 75-80). Nowadays the *waqf* represents a sensitive issue that Lebanese communities face differently.

It is necessary to point out that the *waqf* and the community sphere are not only similar in that they are autonomous with regard to the state; considering that the *waqf* is the "propriety of the community," its development clearly intersects with the idea of common good, making it a public issue that concerns all members of the relevant community. Is the implementation of *waqf* discussed or contested within the community sphere? Are members of the community involved in the development of the *waqf*? Is the *waqf* just in the hands of religious figures? If so, what is the role of the communal individual? Assuming that the *waqf* represents the common good of the community, what is the role of the individual in decision-making?

It is possible to propose more empirical questions. Are these institutions creating informal confessional authorities? How do members of the

177 The state is normally sending a person belonging to the Ministry of the Interior to monitor the elections within those associations that enjoy of formal recognition.

community confront these institutions? How can members participate in the administration of the community's endowments? Do communal individuals hold these institutions that are outside of the state's control, accountable? In the absence of a functioning *majilis*, who improves the *waqf* and how? Does the absence of a institutional figure of reference make it impossible to change the personal status law?

4. Parties, Leaders and Authorities

The Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies, an influential regional think thank based in Beirut, presented a study in 1993 entitled "Civil Society in Beirut: A Working Report." The report analyzed the main non-governmental associations, including religious, communal, economic and professional organizations that work in the Beirut area. Even national political parties, with strict confessional identities and extensive webs of affiliated associations, are included in the report. Many scholars studying the concept of civil society and the related idea of the public sphere question whether political parties belong to the realm of civil society. This study does not attempt to determine whether or not actors belong to the realm of civil society, rather it highlights that most of these parties are characterized by an implicit confessional/communal identity. It is necessary at this point to question if these confessional parties are part of Lebanese civil society, if they attempt to develop or extend the public sphere, or if they represent, on a national level, the "private" interests of a community or one of its clusters with the aim of actively taking part in power-sharing. The distinction between the actions of these parties on a national level and on a communitarian one, will be revisited later.

Scholars assume that the political parties in Lebanon, especially before the outbreak of the civil war, played a major role in shaping the national public sphere by acting as a proper civil society (Kiwan, 1993). According

to Kiwan, the diverse political parties that were acting on a national level before 1975 were in opposition to the power of the state and challenged the Lebanese political system by adopting a critical stance that required maintaining a certain distance from the State (Kiwan, 1993). The onset of the war, in parallel with the increase in communal hostilities, put these parties in a dangerous position, making them actors of the battle. The end of the war allowed for the incorporation of these actors and their leaders, into the political system or state. According to Kiwan and other authors, the pre-war belonging of these political parties to the realm of the civil society is basically grounded on three assumptions: distance from the State, a critical stance vis-à-vis the State, and a nationalistic approach. These assumptions are indicative of the place of the public sphere and its relationship to authorities and rulers. The debate on the public sphere is often unclear about the presence of a space between the state and civil society (Eickelman, 2002). Similarly, Habermas' idea of the public sphere entails a separate realm from the formal structure of political authority and the space of households (Habermas, 1991). Eisenstadt advocates an idea of public sphere that is autonomous and separate from the rulers and the political order, in order to emancipate individuals from their bearing (Eisenstadt, 2002, p. 140).

It is important to highlight the role that confessional parties play on both a national level and a communal one. Is it possible to consider these political parties, most of which have a strict confessional identity, as authorities within the community sphere? Are they acting within the community sphere in order to extend and develop the public sphere? Are they competing on a national level for the "common good" of the nation? Are they solely representing the desire of the community to gain a more influential position on a national level, allowing them to partake in the sharing of power? Are they represented as informal authorities within the community sphere?

What the previous authors, especially Eisenstadt in his stance towards Muslim majority societies, did not taken into consideration, is the distinct positions these actors maintain in both the national and community spheres. In the case of this study, it seems essential to pose some questions that should provoke discussion regarding how to go about approaching a community sphere that is legally institutionalized by the state. Does political authority just represent a prerogative of the state, or are there unofficial forms of power within these institutionalized communities? Do community leaders exert influence on individuals, or is the ruling power still identified with the national state? Is it possible to argue that formal power assumes unofficial forms in the community sphere? It is thus necessary to consider if these informal authorities could obstruct individuals from expressions, freedom and public access.

According to Kiwan, in post-war Lebanon, communal identity overwhelmed the parties' civic approaches and, in a broader sense, communitarian feelings increased within the society (Kiwan, 1993). Such an observation begs the question: who is confronting the state if these former civic national parties have become part of the system?

Another important remark to be made is that such political parties are based on the charisma of one person, the leader of the group. Following, do these actors – especially the leaders of these groups that function on both a national and communal level – act for the common good of the whole community, or are they motivated by a personal agenda? Is there any means to hold such leaders accountable? Are they challenged or criticized within the communal sphere by members of the community?

H. Summarizing the Inquiry

This chapter touches upon various issues that were extrapolated from

literature on the public sphere and used to analyze the Lebanese communal public sphere. The investigation is suggestive with regards to the national public sphere, though it does not exhaust the issue, as that is not the aim of this study; rather, the survey proposes questions that will become variables of inquiry for the analysis of the community public sphere. Such considerations permit a certain distancing from Hudson's idea that it is necessary to consider "public" as opposed to segment-oriented; his idea is grounded on that of the strict relation between the public sphere, analyzed by Hudson in Habermasian terms, and the liberal democratic model that "takes the individual as the unit of analysis, not the ethnic and religious community" (Hudson, 1999, pp. 96-98).

It was observed that in order to analyze the public sphere, strict divides and dichotomies are not useful for the Lebanese case. Public and private, civil and communitarian, religious and secular, are all divides that in this particular case study are necessary for an inquiry into the public sphere, as they offer a more flexible approach to such terms and notions. In his article, "From Consociationalism to the Public Sphere", Hudson suggests that in order to reach the public sphere it is necessary to overtake the consociational Lebanese system. This suggestion is not strictly adhered to in this study, though the proposed relation between the system and the public sphere is an acceptable notion that will be debated in the final chapters of this dissertation.

In the beginning of this study, it was suggested that the Lebanese political, confessional, multi-communal, or consociational system, depending on which perspective is adopted, is creating multiple publics by allocating strict political quotas to respective communities and conceding to the autonomy of these communities through the personal status laws that are defined by the same Lebanese political communities. Furthermore, the presence of other multiple publics that resemble Fraser's idea of subaltern and counterpublics is not denied; however, they do not fall into the scope

of this study and will not be engaged.

Considering the institutional importance of the community as an intermediary between the individual and the state, it is necessary to shift the focus on the communal sphere. At first glance, it seems that the communal sphere is neglected with regards to analysis of its internal dynamics, especially in terms of understanding how the community sphere develops and extends the public sphere in Lebanon.

Following is a list of variables extrapolated from literature on the public sphere and the analysis of the Lebanese case that is useful in the inquiry into the community public sphere:

- The concept of freedom
- Critical stance and acceptance of diversity
- The physical space of the communities
- Communal institutions
- Leaders and authorities
- The communitarian/confessional society
- Communal individuals' role

These variables will be applied to the study of the community public sphere that will be regarded as an institutionalized entity as well as an informal one in which informal practices occur. An example of an informal practice related to the idea of the public sphere that is borrowed from the Greek ideal of participation in the *polis* is that of ostracism within a political or social community. Ostracism corresponds to the exclusion of a voice from the public sphere. The aforementioned ideal of community coupled with the presence of informal practices, reproduce forms of ostracism by denying internal differences; it is thus necessary to consider the display of ostracism as an important aspect of the public sphere. Ostracism can also be interpreted as the other side of the coin of

public dissent, or a consequence of its public expression, especially in the context of a confessional community within a multi-communal system. The attestation of these forms can be used to measure the openness of the public sphere. The focus on ostracism is related to the idea of freedom within the community and the internal recognition of differences that Young proposes is an important device in the framework that supports a positive idea of group. The idea of freedom here is generally understood as what Arendt suggests is the right "to be a participator in government" (Arendt, 1963, p. 221), or in the case of this specific study, a participator in communal public, life and development of the community.

In order to justify a positive meaning of group or community, it is important to analyze if elected communities are reproducing internal forms of exclusion. As Eisenstadt affirms, "the public sphere is the place of the voice rather than of loyalty" (Eisenstadt, 2002, p. 140). It is necessary to add to this assertion that the public sphere is a place of action, as Arendt argues, where freedom goes hand-in-hand with the emancipation of the individual.

Before closing this chapter it is necessary to briefly mention the absence of what many authors call the "plebeian public sphere". Habermas has been strongly criticized for the absence of such a factor in his inquiry into the bourgeois public sphere. It was already mentioned that a deep analysis of the so-called plebeian public sphere would mean a full-immersion into communal society. The initial idea of choosing three communities with a focus on the Lebanese system was an impractical proposition in terms of time and personal ability. Notwithstanding, preliminary observation and the analysis of Lebanese history indicated that such a focus would not be useful in the analysis of communal publics. It would have definitely been important to analyze the dynamics between what Arendt, in her analysis of nineteenth century revolutions, calls "hommes de lettres and the poor", which revolution made visible and significant (Arendt, 1963,

pp. 120-121). It is possible to affirm that the revolution of spring 2005 did not reach this objective, which will remain an open issue for future studies. Whether the gap in class difference will affect the analysis of the Lebanese public sphere is another issue that, although of extraordinary importance, does not represent one of the aims of this study.

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V. The Druze

Many authors have celebrated the predominant role of the Druze community and its main leader Walid Jumblatt in promoting and shaping the *Intifada al-Istiqlal* of Spring 2005, and in leading the opposition political bloc. The Druze leader pushed "le peuple libanais a tenir face a ce régime d'assassins" (El-Halabi, 2005, p. 15) and hosted in his chateau-residence, Moukhtara, in the Chouf Mountains, the parliament of the opposition in such a tense period. The role of the majority of the Druze community has been remarkable in the achievement of the aims that stirred the "revolution" in 2005: the withdrawal of Syrian troops and security agents, Lebanon's independence, and the "Truth" concerning Rafik Hariri's assassination. Such celebration of Druze attempts to achieve state independence and sovereignty is at clash with the main profile that has always been representative of this community, provided mainly by anthropologist. For example, in his attempt to classify religious groups within Islam, Khuri strictly defines the Druze as a "sect," differentiating them from religious movements and minority groups (Khuri, 2006 [1990], p. 21). Khuri underlines the peculiarity of sects, identifying them based on peripherality, territorial concentration and the adoption of "rebellious ideologies [that] reject the state, the authority of centralized power" (Khuri, 2006 [1990], p. 35).

It is not possible here to know or to suggest that the role of the Druze community in the *Intifada al-Istiqlal* of Spring 2005 – especially concerning main leader Walid Jumblatt – was and still is an action aiming at a real development of state institutions, or if it just represents the only means for a small community trapped in confessional sharing to make with the ower.[178] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to strictly relate

178 Hanf suggests that Kamal Jumblatt's claims for a complete secularization of the Lebanese institutions at the beginning of the civil war just represented an attempt by a small community to make with the power. See: Hanf, T. (1993). *Coexistence in wartime Lebanon. Decline of a State and birth of a Nation*. London: I. B. Tauris Publishers.

the role of the Druze community to the Independence Uprising of 2005, though these assumptions deem some consideration. Despite its small quantity, the Druze community in Lebanon has a big influence on a national scale, which the events 2005 confirm. At the same time, the Druze community is clearly characterized by very strong internal cohesion and isolation. An élan to the exterior – the national – and a turning back to the interior – the community -, also characterizes the Druze community. Many authors reject the idea of the Druze as a community with a minority status (Schenk, 2005, p. 85); however, the above suggestions and the self-perception of community's members make it a reality.

This chapter will focus specifically on the Druze, with the attempt to analyze the public sphere within the community, the role of its members in shaping it as well as the communal institutions. After analyzing the main principle of the Druze dogma for possible indications of the Druze mentality, and offering a brief review of the community's historical background, the focus will move to an analysis of the so-called communitarian society. The role of the community's institutions will be analyzed with consideration to both recent attempts at renewal, as well as attempts of Druze women to reach a better status within the community through newly established institutions. The last part of this chapter will be dedicated to reflections on the divide between the public and secretive aspects within the Druze community and to the analysis of the literature on the community published by Druze authors.

A. The Socio-Religious Community

1. Dogma

"We are people with 5.000 years of history behind us and we trace our line back

to Hermes Trimegistes, whom we call Imkopeh..."(Jumblatt, 1982, p. 32).

The Druze consider themselves a population that emerged in the time when souls were shaped and, after continuous reincarnation, continue to exist today. The *da'wa*, the call, from Cairo by the sixth caliph, Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah shaped the dogma of *tawhid* in the fifth century of the Hegira, in the year 408/1017. Since then, followers proselytized all around the region. After falling victims to waves persecution, it was concluded in the year 436/1044 that the followers close the gate of the community and start practicing in secret (*taqiyya*[179]).

The Druze faith (*madhab al-tawhid*) was established with the *da'wa* of the Fatimid caliph Hakim, and by the writings of Hamza bin Ali. Hamza bin Ali was proclaimed Imam of the movement by the caliph and in the same year, wrote the epistles in collaboration with Baha al-Din, in which the norms of the new doctrine and the seven principal pillars that shape the Druze dogma were formulated.[180] Though not widely agreed upon, [181] the name Druze seems to be derived from the provenience Al-Darazi, one of the followers in charge of spreading the new faith in the first years of the sect's existence; he was later expulsed from the community for conduct that deviated from religious principles. Therefore, many Druze prefer to be called *muwahhidun*, literally Unitarians. The followers are

179 The term *taqiyya* refers to the preservation of the faith by simulating of the practices of other communities' rituals. Various authors discuss the possibility of a political *taqiyya* and a religious *taqiyya*. For more on this topic, see: Khuri, F. I. (2004). *Being a Druze*. London: Druze Heritage Foundation, pp. 189-190. The gates of the community are still closed, evidence of the closeness and cohesion of the community.

180 For the seven pillars of the Druze faith see: El Halabi, A. (2005). Les Druzes: vivre avec l'avenir. Beyrouth: éditions Dar An-Nahar, pp. 97-114.

181 See: Abu-Izzedin, N. (1984). The Druze: A New Study of Their History, Faith and Society. New York-Leiden: E. J. Brill; Makarem, S. N. (1974). *The Druze Faith*. New York: Caravan Books; Hishi Selim Hassan, La communaute druze, son origine et son histoire, Beyrouth, 1973.

named *Ahl al-Tawhid* (the people of *tawhid*) in reference to the *tawhid* dogma, which affirms unity and the abstract presence of divinity. It is not possible to consider the Druze faith as orthodoxy of Islam; rather it is a branch of Islam, specifically of the Shiite faith.[182]

One of the main characteristics of the Druze faith is the distinction between *uqqal* and *juhhal*, the initiated and uninitiated members of the community respectively. While the former are publicly visible from their dress and practice religion by following special norms of conduct, the latter are basically non-religious people. As a consequence, the religious practice for the uninitiated represents an individual and personal election.

The strength of the community and its internal cohesion is also derived from two other "practices" or precepts of the community. The first is the wide practice of endogamy that, although diminished in the last decade, has always been very strong, taking the forms of marriages by line of clan, lineage and first-cousin. According to sheikh Sami Abil Mona:

> "I have the right to help the relation within the community, the solidarity. The intermarriage practice helps for the solidarity of the community. Because here in Lebanon we have to be together, we have to play with the solidarity. Marriage is one of the forms in order to maintain solidarity between us. Which kind of future will be reserved for a child born from intermarriage, which environment, the Christian one or the Druze one, what type of religious tradition? He will be lost."[183]

The other practice that strengthens the community is the belief in the reincarnation of the soul in the bodies of other Druze. *We are born in each other's house,* is a common slogan within the community and amongst its

182 Author's interview with Sami Makarem, August 18, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon.
183 Author's interview with sheikh Sami Abil Mona, June 7, 2007, Simqaniyye.

members; it indicates how the number of souls is defined and that everyone has passed through the body of another member of the community. From such a belief comes one of the major precepts of the community that is represented by the solidarity amongst its members, either for the sake of brotherhood or for the concept of love that leads to the knowledge of God.[184] The concept of '*asabiyya* as underlined by Ibn Khaldun[185] and that translates into expressions of unity, solidarity and internal cohesiveness of groups, is reinforced in the Druze faith due to the belief in reincarnation and, in the specific case of the Druze community, by the roles played by religious figures within the community. The *sheikhs*, whose role will be better analyzed later in this chapter, are the religious figures of the community that preserve and practice the faith. Therefore, reincarnation and endogamy practices advocate the consideration of the Druze community in terms of ethnicity and race. According to late Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt:

> "If there is one Druze in a crowd of twenty, it will always be easy to pick him out. Passing time has not changed our race, for custom forbids the Druzes to marry outside their community: there were few exceptions to this rule" (Jumblatt, 1982, p. 32).

Many authors that analyzed the community from an ethnical perspective consider that Druze originate from Yemeni tribes, mixed with Kurdish ethnos.[186]

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184 The wide scope of this belief was confirmed in an informal interview with a Druze woman, who claimed that while waiting to deliver her child, was praying for the soul that died.

185 On the concept of '*asabiyya*, see: Ibn Khaldun (1989). *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History*. Princeton: Bollingen Series.

186 Abu-Izzedin Nejla, *The Druzes: A New Study of Their History, Faith and Society*, E.J. Brill, New York-Leiden, 1984, pp. 1-14; Khouri Fuad I., *Being a Druze*, Druze Heritage

2. The Sociological Community in Modern Era

> "The Druze amaze me: they are so much attached to their community, proud of their identity, while claiming, all the while, to know very little about dogma. Apparently, group affiliation is more important than dogma"(Khuri, 2004, pp. 79-80).

The words of Khuri show how faith precepts and community affiliation go hand-in-hand in the Druze community. It has been showed in the previous paragraph how the precepts of the faith highlight feelings of cohesion, brotherhood and solidarity amongst the members of the community. Cohesion and solidarity seem suitable terms to describe the community, also by external observation. In the collective imaginary that feeds Lebanon's stereotypes, the Druze are perceived by most as a community of "peasants in arms" or warriors, although many of the authors that study the Druze community attempt to dismiss such an idea. Although the idea of the Druze as strong warriors is a construction in Lebanese history, for some members of the community such an idea fits into their representation of self. Walid Jumblatt, the almost undisputed leader of the community, denotes such self-perception in its words:

> "No, we are small numbers but we have been able for centuries to defend ourselves here. It is not easy because demography is not on our side, but we are attached to our land."[187]

Foundation, London, 2004; Makarem Sami Nasib, *The Druze Faith*, Caravan Books, New York, 1974; Betts Robert Brenton, *The Druze*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988; Cobban Helena, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, Hutchinson Educational, London, 1985.

187 Author's interview with Walid Jumblatt, September 8, 2007, Moukhtara, Lebanon.

Besides the defensive tone of Jumblatt's words, such a statement denotes other aspects: being a minority in demographic terms, the historical struggle and the attachment to the land.

Some authors underline that the Druze are not a minority with a minority complex (Schenk, 2005). It is possible to agree with the latter suggestion if we intend it as an isolationist attitude assumed by the group, but if we analyze it in terms of self-perception it is possible to reach other conclusions. Various members of the community highlighted feelings of minority in their self-image during informal talks, especially with regards to threat of disappearance. It is difficult to know if this is due to the capacity of leaders of the community to manipulate the mentality of its members in order to strengthen affinity, or if it is related to the strong sectarianism prevalent around the time of the study's development. The reality is that many members of the community, especially in the mountain-society, represent their community as a threatened minority that needs cohesion, implicitly rejecting any idea of internal public criticism. This issue will be revisited later on in this chapter while analyzing diversity and internal criticism.

Another factor that highlights the community's minority attitude is its facility in changing political and regional alliances. The Druze leadership's change of political attitude, either on a national or regional-international level, may amaze many observers. Such fluctuation could be related to the idea of preservation of existence.[188] The self-perception of members

188 In an informal interview, a member of the Druze community attempted to explain to me why the Druze did not attempt to prevent the Israeli invasion and settlement in the Chouf Mountain in 1982, though they fought side by side with Palestinians during the civil war. In his words "Us, the Druze, we fight only if we know that there is a possibility to win. If not, we can't put at risk our own existence. It is the same mentality the Druze community had and still have in Israel. But if we think that we will have some possibilities to win, we will be the first in fighting. Draw your conclusion on the actual situation in Lebanon before Syrian withdrawal".

of the community also, as normal practice in multi-communal Lebanon, mingles with issues concerning the history of the Lebanese entity. The delicate issue of the interpretation of Lebanon's modern history is still far from being internally resolved, especially when each community presents itself as the real indigenous population on which Lebanon was established, which exudes a sense of exclusiveness. The Druze community's self-image does not deviate from such idea. Many of the people interviewed for this study emphasized "they are the indigenous Lebanese community that built Lebanon from Mount Lebanon."[189] Such an allusion refers to the period at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the *kaimakkan* and the *mutasarrifiyya* that were based in what is now called Mount Lebanon. It is evident that in those times the Lebanese political system was informally established almost in its current actual form; however, it is also clear that the Lebanese entity, as we now know it saw its birth in 1920 with the inclusion of other areas with a different history from that of Mount Lebanon.[190] The history of the Druze is the history of Druze leaders and families;[191] the Tannukhs, the Maans, Fakhreddine II, the Nakadis, the Abd el Maliks, the Jumblats, the Yazbakis are just few examples. The last two mentioned families are still present in Lebanon, and they represent the two main family factions. Feelings of cohesion and solidarity, with reference to the sociological community, help the idea of continuity, especially in leadership term. This way, the modest size of

189 Such a statement was common amongst the Druze that were interviewed.

190 I consider the issue concerning the debate on Lebanese modern history perhaps the most important question the country faces, as its response implicitly entails the idea of diversity, national unity and inclusion of others–which are all reasons of existence of the Lebanese entity.

191 The only exception is the popular revolt staged in Mount Lebanon in the years before the creation of the *kaimakkan*, when the population rose against landlords before the strife was transformed into a sectarian issue. See: Makdisi, U. S. (2000). *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

the community can be seen as one of the reasons for stability in terms of leadership (Khuri, 2004, p. 147). At the same time cohesion is tested, especially in times of internal tension and strong national polarization.[192]

The "House of Jumblatt" has been attesting its presence in Lebanon for more than four centuries, while the Arslan family has been established since the eighth century. The opposition between these two families has not always been conflictive, especially due to marriage contracts. The Jumblatt and Arslan families are to this day characterized by a strong feudal structure that is publicly exemplified by their respective denominations as *bey* and *emir* – distinctions that are sociologically based on the existing ranks between the Druze families of Lebanon: *emir*, *bey* (baik), *sheikh*, *muqata'ji*, "head of commoners" and "commoners" (Khuri, 2004, p. 141). Feudal structures, family affiliation and community overlap amongst the Druze of Lebanon, especially in the mountain society that is rooted in village life. In his study on Mount Lebanon, Dominique Chevallier defines the system as:

> "le group familial, la "maison", forme donc l'unité sociale de base, et son organisation agit sur tout les structures qui lui sont supérieures, aussi bien dans la communauté maronite que dans la communauté druze. Cette formation familiale trouve son assise territoriale dans le village, qui comprend au moins une autre formation familiale semblable. Le village constitue donc un ensemble

192 Khuri and Harik J. Palmer do not agree with regards to the cohesion of the community during the years of the civil war. The former suggests that the Druze were the only community that did not split into warring factions, while the latter affirms that the Arslan family's stand with the Christian Maronite community during the war of the Mountain in 1983 caused the family to fall in disgrace. See: Khuri, F. (2005). Aspects of Druze Social Structure: 'There Are No Free-Floating Druze'. In *The Druze, Realities & Perceptions*, edited by Kamal Salibi. London: Druze Heritage Foundation, p. 61; Harik, J. P. (2005). Coping with Crisis: Druze Civic Organization during the Lebanese Civil War. In *The Druze, Realities & Perceptions*, edited by Kamal Salibi. London: Druze Heritage Foundation, p. 203.

élaboré"(Chevallier, 1971, p. 26).

Kamal Jumblatt similarly explains the power of the feudal structure of its power, adding another peculiarity to the typical idea of mountainous village life:

> "Our roots in Lebanon lie in Moukhtara, a little village in the Chouf where my family's palace is situated. Here I'm often called 'the Lord of Moukhtara', sometimes a little ironically...On Sunday, in our house, the people of the neighboring area come to greet us and to ask questions: ' What is the new, how are the politics going...'. They sometimes come to consult us about their personal problems, the projects they would like to carry out in the village, even their medical problems. They expect a great deal from me. As I am the parliamentary representative and have little influence in the state, they rely on me to build this or that school, a particular road, a new water pipe: in short, to deal with everything which concerns public services" (Jumblatt, 1982, p. 26 and p. 36).

Kamal Jumblatt's words exemplify the patron-client relationship amongst the Druze of Lebanon as well as many other Lebanese communities. The relationship between the *zu'ama* and the *ahali* are based on reciprocal interests (Khuri, 2004, p. 247). The z*a'im*'s political power in the village system is almost pyramidal in nature; the top is held by the leader who has access to state offices and strong personal resources; the base is composed of "clusters" of leaders and families that are in contact with the members of the community on the local, village level (Khuri, 2004, p. 156). The *za'im*'s political power is always conditional on the bringing of resource and facilities to the members of the communities from state institutions.[193] At the same time, the patron is required to support the

193 During the Syrian presence in Lebanon, Druze figures normally held positions in the Ministry of the Displaced. The majority of displaced people in the aftermath of the

za'im in times of political elections and also has to be prompt in terms of obedience to the *za'im's* instructions.

3. The Community's Space: *al-ard*

The land, *al-ard*, is for the Druze, one of the informal pillars of their faith. The territory of residence is considered sacred, especially due to the presence of shrines and sanctuaries. The land and its possessions are also an integral part of the community, as they connote freedom and dignity, which comprise the ideological base of the Druze political party philosophy as outlined by Kamal Jumblatt:

> "One of ours' party demands is "Every Lebanese a Landowner". Small or medium landholdings change people's attitudes and help them adopt a more independent, dignified and responsible stance towards the authorities. A sense of responsibility and a love of freedom go hand in hand with possession of land" (Joumblatt, 1982, p. 33).

The Druze community comprises 6-7% of the entire Lebanese population; "their" land is basically the Chouf mountain region, the area around Hasbaya, a little portion in the Metn region, Aley, and, as for all Lebanese communities, the capital Beirut.[194] Beside Lebanon, Druze communities also reside in other Middle Eastern countries, such as Jordan, Syria and Israel.[195] The Chouf mountain region is the land, par excellence, of the

civil war where the Christians that left the Chouf mountains.

194 It is difficult to know the precise of Druze in Lebanon due foremost to the lack of a real census. Khuri quantifies them as around 300,000; Helena Cobban, at the end of the seventies, quantifies around 250,000; Robert Brenton Betts considers there to be around 390,000.

195 For a general idea of the Druze communities in these other countries, see: Nissim, D. (2003). *The Druze in the Middle East. Their Faith, Leadership, Identity and Status*.

Druze community, due mainly to the presence of the residence of Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, in the Moukhtara village. The Chouf started to become the homogeneous territory of the Druze, especially after the civil war. In 1983, after the Israelis withdrew from the mountains around Beirut, a large clash occurred in the Chouf region–the so-called "war of the mountain" – between the predominantly Christian Lebanese Forces and the mainly Druze militia of the Progressive Socialist Party. The war, that lasted a few weeks, homogenized the land, as the majority of the Christian population was expulsed. The return of the Christians to the Druze mountains is still a delicate issue, albeit attempts by political and religious figures from both factions to reach an agreement. Another consequence of the territorial war was the creation, in the same 1983, of the Civil Administration of the Mountain (CAOM) that lasted until 1991. In 1976, at the beginning of the Civil War, Kamal Jumblatt attempted to create a similar institution, The Popular Administration; however, the invasion by Syrian troops put an end to this attempt a few months later.[196] The CAOM basically reproduced the informal structure of a state in a period of clear internal division. There existed within the CAOM a General Service Bureau, a Secretary General, an Education and Teaching Committee, a Social Affair and Housing Committee, to name a few. Members of the Druze party, many of which to this date remain Walid Jumblatt's right-hand men, formed the CAOM.[197] Reproducing the structure of an autonomous territory for the Druze is reminiscent of the experience of the double *kaimakkan* of the nineteenth century in Mount Lebanon that

Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

196 For more information the internal structure of the CAOM, see: Harik, J. P. (2005). Coping with Crisis: Druze Civic Organization during the Lebanese Civil War. In *The Druze, Realities & Perceptions*, edited by Kamal Salibi. London: Druze Heritage Foundation.

197 Ghazi Aridi, now Minister of Information, was at the time directing the CAOM Druze radio station.

brought about the sectarian clashes between the Druze and Maronites a few years later. Meanwhile the Syrian Druze had, for a short period of time at the beginning of the twentieth century, their own state in the former Jabal Druze, now Jabal Arab. The Lebanese Druze never had formal autonomy, except for during the short-lived *kaimakkan* period.

The Druze leader Walid Jumblatt is the owner of the largest estate in the Chouf region (Khuri, 2004, p. 31). The relation between land, community, power and the possible socio-political influence of leaders on their inhabitants must be directly correlated to the assumed general weakness of the Lebanese state. It seems necessary to question how the relation between community, land and leader's influence can affect the development of a free and open space of interaction for members of the community. I will advance some suggestions here, deferring larger considerations to latter sections.

The idea of the "defense of our land" as previously underlined by Walid Jumblatt is, in a way, considering territory as not part of the state, but propriety of the community or its leaders. In such circumstances, the acquisition of a portion of territory by "private individuals" belonging to a different community could contest national antagonism between two or more communities, as supported by an incident that occurred recently. After the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006, the installation of the Lebanese Army and the international UNIFIL troops at the border between Israel and Lebanon limited the visible movement of the Hezbollah army. Consequently, rumors spread that the Shiite political movement was attempting to acquire new lands in territories north of Litani River in order to create new bases and strongholds to organize resistance movements against Israel. Thus, competition between communities regarding the acquisition of territory became a reality. Walid Jumblatt went as far as to appeal to the communal affiliations of a rich Christian businessman in order to stop Shiites from buying land in the sensitive confessional

area.[198]

The words of sheikh Sami Abil Mona, vice-president of the Druze Irfan establishment, are indicative of the intricate contest among land, communities and leaders:

> "In Hasbaya there were many great Druze families. These "sheiks", also if they are not religious persons, have many lands in this territory. They are not inhabited and they sold 250.000 meters of that land for a Shiite rich man. Jumblatt told his people that maybe this person was working for Hezbullah. They are trying to buy these lands and build their own land, because Shiite wants their own land near the border with Israel. They like to have complete authorities there."[199]

Due to its geographical position, the Druze land of the Chouf makes members of the community stipulate on its importance:

> "The Chouf Mountains are basically a Druze region. The Druze, in case of internal conflict, with the possession of the integrity of such territory could divide Lebanon in three parts. It will be especially tough for the Shiite, because they would divide them also in three sides, between those of Beirut, of the South and of the Beeka. They would need to install settlements to dismantle this clear predominance."[200]

The land represents more than a territory of residence; it represents a pos-

198 "PSP demands Skaff prove he did not sell land to Iran". (2007, August 27). *The Daily Star*; "Un homme d'affaires zahliote souhaiterait racheter les terrains acquis par Skaff". (2007, September 7). *L'Orient – Le Jour*; "Hashem says accusation of land-grab 'fabricated'. (2007, March 3). *The Daily Star*.

199 Author's interview with sheikh Sami Abil Mona, June 7, 2007, Simqaniyye, Lebanon.

200 Author's interview with Mounir Bou Ghanem, June 1, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

sible shelter for the community in case of political escalation within the country and possible leverage to take advantage of other communities. In such conditions, the land is just a tool in the hands of the community, more specifically, communitarian leaders that decide which politics to adopt on "their" territory. In the midst of Lebanese political tensions of the last three years and the increase of sectarian affiliations, the municipalities of the Chouf, after the explosion that rocked the Druze town of Aley, decided to make motorists visiting the mountain area display ID cards on their windshields.[201] The physical space of the community, due to the absence of the state, which many tend to highlight as an excuse, is becoming a place for unregulated rules imposed by unofficial authorities that do not necessarily belong to the central state authority. The Beirut based Hayyabina organization released a report in 2005 under the name Km^2 VS $Km^{sovereignty}$ regarding the situation in the Chouf region, which was ironically coined "Jumblatistan:"

> "The limited sovereignty of the state over the Chouf is due to several factors. One is that the Chouf has a special legitimacy because, as an entity, it predates the Lebanese state. Another is the structure of the Chouf society where Mr.Jumblatt possesses a near-holy standing that is beyond politics and state sovereignty."[202]

Other consequences that reside in the importance of the land for the community will be better analyzed in the chapter on the communitarian society. Such a brief analysis of the importance of the land in the Druze

201 Zeineddine, M. (2007, June 8). Officials hope new IDs for cars will guard Chouf against bombs. System is designed to help detect suspicious vehicles. *The Daily Star*. Such precaution in the aftermath of the various bombs that exploded in Beirut area in May 2007 pushed people to hang papers requiring the display of telephone number in many Beirut neighbourhoods. The increase tension provoked the fear of the stranger.
202 See Appendix II.

mentality coupled with the special character of the Chouf mountains, pushes one to consider the possible appearance of informal authorities in the region that could possibly restrain the inhabitants and prevent them from acting freely.

4. The Current Political Situation: Continuity and Polarization

> "Always be faithful to the truth, in your action and your words" (First pillar of Tawhid faith).

After almost three years, it is difficult to look back at the beginnings of the Independence Uprising of 2005 as a "revolution" by Lebanese people who neglected their community affiliation. Time showed that confessional group affiliations grew stronger in the past years. The Druze played a great role in shaping the anti-Syrian uprising as exemplified by their leader, Walid Jumblatt. The relationship between Jumblatt and Syria was good until the year 2000,[203] when the Druze started blinking at the Christian opposition to Syria occupation of Lebanon. The position of Jumblatt toward Syria had been oscillating between one of total rejection and one of loyalty until the year 2004. The extension of President Emile Lahoud's term in 2004 provoked the firm rejection by the Jumblatt bloc. Such a position represented the first real defection from the Syrian ranks after the end of the civil war. The Jumblatt bloc did not vote for Lahoud's extension and began building the opposition bloc. The huge gathering to support Jumblatt position in Moukhtara, December 2004, represented a prelude to the uprising that may have probably never happened had it not been for the assassination of Rafik Hariri. Jumblatt was ready to lead the

203 Darrous, S. (2000, November 13). Thousands flock to Chouf to offer Jumblat support. *The Daily Star*.

opposition bloc with the popular help of his wife Nora,[204] gathering the former Bristol platform to create a small parliament that met frequently in his castle in Moukhtara. Rafik Hariri's assassination permitted the opposition to finally gain the confidence of the majority of Sunnis from the Future Movement. They all marched together in the streets of Beirut, to expulse Syria from Lebanon and to shed light on Hariri's assassination, under the banner of the Truth, which coincidentally is also the first pillar of the Druze faith.

The election of June 2005 resulted in the complete occupation of the Druze seats in Parliament by Jumblatt's bloc, leaving out Talal Arslan–an event that did not happen since the end of the civil war.[205] While Arslan took the side of the new opposition, the former loyalists to Syria, Jumblatt was proclaimed the undisputed leader of the Druze community. In the Chouf district, Walid Jumblatt and Marwan Hamade won the two seats reserved for the Druze without contest, due to the absence of other candidates.[206] The Druze leaders were divided in the political polarization that dominated the country in the successive years; while Jumblatt was firmly speaking out for the 14th of March bloc, Arslan took the side of the 8th of March bloc. Direct confrontation on a national level has never been reported; the only stage in which contest arose was in the "internal" affair of the election of the new *sheikh al aql* that will be analyzed later in this chapter. Brief clashes erupted between the two sides, soon sedated by

204 Nora Jumblat represented the link between politicians and activists in the "Freedom Camp" at the beginning of the Independence Uprising. She played a great role in helping demonstrators with facilities.

205 According to Richani, the composition of the political elite changed in 1982-1987 due to several factors. The traditional land-based Arlsan clan represented the Druze in the political system. See: Richani, N. (1990). The Druze of Mount Lebanon: Class Formation in a Civil War, *Middle East Report*, No. 162, pp. 26-30.

206 Zeineddine, M. (2005, June 13). Jumblat, Hamade take uncontested seats. *The Daily Star*.

political and religious figures of the community.[207] An unexpected third pole soon appeared around the figure of Wiam Wahab, a former Minister during Syria presence in Lebanon.[208] While the confrontation between Arslan and Jumblatt has abided by "the rules of the game," Wahab, taking the side of the opposition, has been challenging Jumblatt's leadership within the community. As a result, clashes erupted in some villages of the Chouf. Only the intervention of religious figures permitted control of the situation.

In the previous chapter, the importance of internal public criticism toward leaders within the community in terms of accountability was considered. In light of what has been analyzed and in light of the historical presence and continuity in leadership, some interrogatives seem useful.

The consolidated position of Walid Jumblatt as unopposed leader in the community pushes one to consider what challenge this leadership receives from other members of the community, and what criticism is addressed toward the leadership from the community public sphere. Does the strict political opposition represent a challenge to Jumblatt or is it simply a contest between feudal elites for power within the community and as representatives on a national level. Jumblatt, Arslan and Wahab's political parties difficultly displayed public forms of challenges from members of the parties or from the community toward their leaders. According to Khuri, the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) of Walid Jumblatt is, to the mountain society, "a tool for the emergence of a new political elite without challenging the established leadership, and is a channel of communication between ranks and leadership, that gives committed participation in the political arena" (Khuri, 2004, p. 148). Instead confirm-

207 Sfeir, T. (2005, July 4). Five men shot in conflict between Arslan and Jumblat supporters. *The Daily Star*; Ghazal, R. (2006, July 6). Rival Druze factions stage gun battle in Chouf Mountains, 1 dead in clashes. *The Daily Star*.
208 Wiam Wahab is the head of *Tayyar al Tawhid*, the Tawhid movement.

ing that discussion is taking place within the community on how to rule the community, Walid Jumblatt proclaimed, "we have Marwan Hamade and Ghazi Aridi for example, and they have their own say."[209] It seems difficult to understand how the discussion amongst the members of the community or within the same political party allows the leadership to take a different approach from its own stance.[210] It is important to underline that the various stances within the Druze community, and mainly the Druze political parties, are neither public nor visible. Abbas El-Halabi suggests a framework for further considerations of the possible challenge the leadership faces from independent candidates:

> "You cannot be independent, because there is a coalition that through compromise not allow other people to run for a place. If you are not belonging to one them you are cut off. There is no chance for other people."[211]

The issue of internal public criticism and challenge of community leadership can be related to the power and influence on the territory of the community by the same leadership. In the following section, we will attempt to analyze the so-called communitarian society in order to check if this wide web of communal and non-communal organizations is adopting such an attitude towards the community leadership from a ground-level perspective.

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209 Author's interview with Walid Jumblatt, September 8, 2007, Moukhtara, Lebanon.

210 Every year the Progressive Socialist Party organizes a gathering to discuss the political lines to follow.

211 Author's interview with Abbas El-Halabi, June 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

B. Communitarian Society or Civil Society?

1. Searching for the Public Sphere: Explanations and Preliminary Classification

While considering the idea of public sphere in the previous chapter, we have been pointing out various interrogatives on the role of the so-called communitarian society within the specificity of the Lebanese system, which implicitly underlines the importance of the community sphere. We advanced some questions that here need to be partly answered. The role of these organizations has been questioned in terms of autonomy, independence, and freedom of expression with a special reference to the community sphere and its institutions and authorities. The general interrogative concerned the role they have in extending or developing either the community public sphere either the broad Lebanese public sphere.

This paragraph will be grounded, on one side, on an investigative approach, in order to understand the role of these organizations in the communal public, and with the attempt to find such critical stance toward community's authorities. On the other side we will analyze in depth the internal structure of the considered organizations in order to shed light on the functioning of the same.

I will now try to briefly explain the methodology for the election of the organizations that have been taken into consideration and propose a means of classification, taking into consideration that these organizations only represent a sample from an intricate and large web within the Druze community. Firstly, I took into consideration associations that have a specific Druze connotation, where Druze belonging is an essential condition for affiliation. Besides this denomination, I also analyzed organizations, rather institutions or macro-organizations, that work in the predominantly Druze mountains and thus have a special role towards the Druze people. These organizations are considered institutions or macro-

organizations because they are engaged from early educational to professional formation and also provide inhabitants with health services. I then analyzed associations that I consider Druze due to the predominance of Druze members and the work environment, but that are hesitant in being classified as Druze. As a third approach, I considered organizations that have been established by Druze individuals because their work is on the territory of residence of the community. As a final approach, I tried to interview and informally engage with members of the Druze community that work in the national public sphere, trans-confessional organizations or are members of international institutions such as the United Nations. I considered these last individuals in order to shed light on the general role and involvement of what I previously defined as communal individuals, because I considered such individuals as active within the community, but that have various approaches to the multiple spheres.

The majority of the fieldwork took place in Beirut and in the resident mountains of the community, especially around the towns of Baaklin, Simqaniyye and Barouk and the area around the town of Aley and Abey, all located in the Chouf region. Most of these organizations are based in the Lebanese capital of Beirut, regardless of the direction of their work. In an institutional and juridical framework, these organizations are almost all registered in the Ministry of the Interior as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or as non-profit organizations. Every two years, the Ministry of Interior sends a delegate to oversee the internal elections, making sure they are conducted with regard to the established norms.

I have attempted to propose a classification for the sample of Druze organizations here analyzed in order to give a better idea as to the issues the organizations engage with. I will divide them into the following four categories:

- Welfare Organizations

- Environmental Organizations
- Charitable Organizations
- Networks of Mutual Help

It is necessary to add to such classification, the analysis of the so-called macro-associations or informal institutions of the mountain society.

2. A Sample of Druze Organizations

Welfare Associations:

I distinguished the charitable organizations from the welfare associations because the latter tend to develop and raise awareness amongst individuals on issues that concern the whole society. Under this category, I analysed the following two associations: the Village Welfare Society and the Society of Lebanese the Givers. Both organizations are characterized by an inter-confessional approach, if either established by Druze or if engaged in places with a strong Druze presence, that places the members of the community as the main beneficiaries of the services provided by such associations.

Anissa Al Najjar, a 94-year-old woman still very active within the community, established the association Village Welfare Society in 1951. The main objective of this organization is to provide rural Druze and Christian women with skills and aid. The first school was built in the area around Aley in 1951. Nowadays, the organization runs various educational centres and organizes workshops all around Mount Lebanon. The original aim of the association was women's suffrage, coinciding with the elections of 1951. Educating women about their role in the village economic system and helping them establish economic independence,

merged with the provision of better educational opportunities.[212] The association organizes cooking and craft workshops, with the main objective to provide women with the necessary skills to create their own economy with in the village, to keep them from searching for jobs in the city. The association assumes a very critical stance with respect to policies from the State, from which no monetary aid is received; rather, funding is received from various foreign embassies and American universities abroad. The organization does not claim to be strictly Druze, however, a strong Druze identity was obvious:

> "We don't work for the Druze community in particular, I want to help everyone with confessional discrimination, and maybe for this reason the elites of the community always made me very little donations."[213]

Established over thirty years later in 1983, The Society of Lebanese the Givers headed by Hayat Arslan shares many common objectives with the former concerning awareness, education and aid. Like The Village Welfare Society, projects are mostly developed in predominately Druze areas like Aley, Hasbaya and Sofar. The organization currently has 735 members and 17 branches all around Mount Lebanon. It organizes and runs festivals, workshops, handicraft cooperatives, professional schools and a one nursing school in Hasbaya. On a national level the organization focuses awareness on the absence of the women in politics, coinciding with the fact that the president of the organization was the first woman in Lebanese history to be elected to Parliament. To manage this imbalance,

212 On women's role within the Druze community, see: Azzam, I. J. (2007). *Gender and Religion: Druze Women*. London: Druze Heritage Foundation.

213 Author's interview with Anissa Al Najjar, August 4, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon; Also madame Najar is gathering around her the women of the community that attempt to change their status within the community. See the paragraph on Druze woman status reform.

the association is asking for female empowerment as well as a political quota.[214] Unlike its counterpart, The Society of Lebanese the Givers attempts to directly engage in the national public sphere by openly criticizing the actual political system of the country and the ineffectiveness of the political class, while, at the same time, and from a more communitarian perspective, disagrees with the Lebanese semi-tribal system.[215]

Environmental Organizations:

The Lebanese House Establishment for the Environment represents the hypothetical bridge between the categories of Welfare Organizations and Environmental Organizations, the latter of which is characterized by an approach based on environmental protection and develop. The association, established in 1999 by sheikh Nizam Bou Khzam, has its main headquarter is in Kfar Khim in the Chouf. The association aims to raise awareness about environmental protection, focusing its attention towards an inter-confessional audience with to the goal of raising general civil awareness to the greater population:

> "The point 0 is the environment. Through the respect of the environment it is possible to reach any objective. It is necessary to see the environment as a metaphor, and changing the mentality of the people toward the environment, it is possible to change the mentality in a more vide form, that will be possible to apply to different realm of the society." [216]

The association is comprised of 235 members, 100 of whom are active.

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214 Information recollected from The Society of Lebanese the Givers' pamphlet.
215 Hatoum, L. (2005, May 20). 'Electoral democracy' doubted. Lebanon's first ever Druze female candidate speaks out against 'uncontested wins'. *The Daily Star*; p. 4.
216 Author's interview with sheikh Nizam Bou Khzam, August 10, 2005, Kfar Khim, Lebanon.

Most members are of the Druze faith; however, this majority does not deter from an inter-confessional approach as the organization belongs to a national macro-network of eight Lebanese associations that promotes environmental awareness. Although the main headquarters is located in Kfar Khim, the association has other offices around Mount Lebanon. The association works closely with children of local primary schools, organizing activities such as "Clean-Up Day" and tree planting. Another important goal is to increase cultural-touristic development of the mountain region, which is achieved through the organization of summer camps in the region. The profits generated from such activities, along with annual membership fees and donations from private individuals, comprise the organization's funding. It is self-evident that the relationship between the organization and territory is strong, from both environmental and cultural perspectives that keep with the area's traditions.[217] Yet, in keeping with an inter-confessional approach, the association is organizes lectures that discuss, not only the environment, but also concepts of citizenship and national identity, "because we are Druze, but before everything we are Lebanese."[218]

The association Animal Encounter is a sanctuary for animal species facing extinction in the Mount Lebanon area. The Abi Saids, a Druze family, established the association. Like The Lebanese House Establishment for the Environment, Animal Encounter was established after the civil war. Animal Encounter also organizes summer camps that teach primary schools students respect towards animals and nature. The animal sanctuary is located in upper Aley, whose municipality is, according to

217 The association is attempting also to resume traditional works in the Chouf. At the time of my field visit, members of the association were working with local primary school students on the restoration of an old spring.

218 Author's interview with sheikh Nizam Bou Khzam, August 10, 2005, Kfar Khim, Lebanon.

the founders, "the only institution that helped us open."[219] The association does not receive funding from the State, just from private patrons, banks and foreign embassies depending on the project being developed.

Finally, the Al-Chouf Cedar Society, based in Moukhtara, was chosen because its honorary president is Druze leader Walid Jumblatt. The association was established in 1996 in order to protect and develop the Al-Chouf Cedar Natural Reserve, and is more-or-less Druze oriented with volunteer workers from villages surrounding the reserve. The Bureau is comprised of six to eight people and sustains itself financially from revenues obtained from entrance fees and the sales of handcrafts made by the villagers. It seems clear from informal talks with volunteers that Walid Jumblatt is one of the main donors. The volunteer workers enjoy a certain social prestige from surrounding villages, as the cedar tree is an important national emblem, imbued with strong political and social value.[220]

Charitable Organizations:

The common characteristic amongst charitable organizations is that they were all established in times of crisis, mostly during the last civil war, or, as in the case of the Social Welfare League, during the tense political situation of 1958. Such a condition suggests strong sentiments of solidarity within the community to find solutions to the collapse of state institutions and services and the "canonization" of the country, which is in line with Druze philosophy.[221]

It is necessary to underline a difference between associations that work within the Druze mountain regions, such as the Druze Charitable

219 Author's interview with Diana Abi Said, August 3, 2005, Aley, Lebanon.
220 There are two other cedar reserves in Bcharre and Tannourine, both in the North of Lebanon.
221 For a review of Druze charitable organizations, see: Khuri, F. I. (2004). *Being a Druze*. London: Druze Heritage Foundation, p. 159.

Organization, and those that work in the urban capital Beirut in order to develop communication between the two regions. Strict relations with more rural regions characterize both typologies of association.

The Druze Charitable Organization, belonging to the first aforementioned category, is perhaps the first Druze charitable association. Founded in 1929, it is based in Beirut. The association is active in the area of Wata El-Mussaitbeh, which was a predominately Druze area at its time of establishment. Formed by six Druze families that moved to Beirut the year before officially founded, the organization's main objective is to help the needy. The fact that the Committee of Direction is comprised by the same six families, with some additions, suggest that the organization serves the middle class interest to gain prestige with in the area of residence and consequently create a wide support network.[222] The organization provides around 360 families with care package, while also running a school, originally for members of the Druze community, a religious house, where members of the religion can pray and organize lectures, and a small clinic of seven doctors, where medical visits are around four dollars. The clinic is accessible to all residents of the area regardless of confession. The presence of the school, clinic and religious house were intended to give the population access to tools and facilities so that they do not leave the area to satisfy such needs.

Belonging to the second typology, the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare is another charitable organization that focuses mainly on education. One of the main objectives is to provide less fortunate families with money donations, so that they may remain on their territory of residence. The association was established in 1983 with support from community leaders, although later began collecting donations from the

222 These associations resemble Islamic charitable organizations. For more on this issue, see: Clark, J. A. (2003). *Islam, Charity and Activism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Druze diaspora. The association has strong ties and recently signed an agreement with the American University of Beirut. In 2002, the association patronized sixteen Druze students with scholarships of $20,000 each. The Committee of the Wise, consisting of 52 members 12 of which form the Committee of Direction, meets every two months to discuss the agenda of the organization. Besides the General Vice-Secretary, the other people involved in the association are volunteers.

The Social Welfare League aims at helping Druze students graduate from university. Druze students in the American University of Beirut established the League in 1958. Although, in a sense, elitist, it necessary to highlight that the internal organization of the organization is well structured. The organization is composed of eight committees headed by a respective President that is elected every two years. The claimed objective of the association is to fight ignorance and promote public freedoms for individuals in society, by organizing lectures and debates with presenters from different confessional communities. Besides this inter-confessional aspect, the activities remain within the Druze community; furthermore, belonging to the Druze confession is a necessary requirement of membership. Besides students, affiliation is also reserved to people with degrees, suggesting that the underlying objective of the organization is to create a network of middle-class affiliates. The objective of networking is best articulated by Fouad El-Rayess, the head of the Committee of Direction:

> "Now I help a student or a member of the organization, and in the future he or she can help me when I will need it, or another person that will need an help."[223]

Therefore it seems that the creation of a middle-class network is also typical of charitable and welfare associations. Although partially elitist, it

223 Author's interview with Fouad El-Rayess, July 28, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon.

is necessary to highlight the well-structured internal organization, composed of eight committees with elections every two years and each of them with a President that is the responsible of the committee.

The last two associations under this category are the Secondary Schooling of Orphans and the Ladies Friendship Society, both sharing common characteristics on both a practical level and from an ideological perspective. Both associations are composed of only women, the majority belong to middle and upper classes. According to Amal Shantouf, a member of the aforementioned, the organization is "like an hobby to keep us busy and help other members of the community."[224] Another common objective between both associations is assisting the less fortunate pursue vocational studies. The probability that the graduates will become part of the middle class is indicative of the reasoning behind the gesture. The Secondary School for Orphans focuses on all education up to university, the Ladies Friendship Society established prioritizes funding Druze university students. The students in the first case are selected through an informal process with the Druze Orphanage of Abey; in the second case, the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare elect students affiliated with the organization. Established in 2001, the first organization has managed to help not more than fifteen students; whereas, the second association has already granted more than one hundred scholarships, founded during wartime, in 1986.

Network of Mutual Help

The Network of Mutual Help category is comprised of associations that have no concrete or material objective other than improving relationships amongst members of the Druze community. Although only one association was taken into consideration, the characterizing objective

224 Author's interview with Amal Shantouf, August 18, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon.

of this category is to "reinforce the community, considering that it is a little society, and create a network of people with the same background, in order to help the community grow stronger."[225] The Young Druze Professional is an urban endeavour and the first of its kind to be established in the United States amongst the Druze of the diaspora later expanding to various countries around the world including Lebanon. The Lebanese branch was established in 1994. Among its main objectives is to create a "networking system within the community," that is, creating a system of reciprocal help amongst members of the association to foster internal relations and assist with employment opportunities. The association provides letters of recommendation to its members as well as database of Lebanese Druze businessman whom could provide employment opportunities. Belonging to the Druze community is obviously a fundamental requirement for affiliation. "Networking" is a pillar of the association – *Networking is the key to success in any business* – along with the understanding that such power helps to shape a new urban middle class that "will be the future generation to rule the community."[226] Established in the United States far from the Lebanese social structure, it is possible to designate this type of organization as an alter ego of the clientele system rooted in the mountain society, though of a strictly urban environment.

Mountain Institutions: Macro-Organizations

Classified under this category are basically three informal institutions of the Druze mountain society previously mentioned: the Irfan Establishment, the Ainwazein Hospital and the Druze Orphanage. It is not important to focus closely on these macro-organizations, though it is necessary to survey their respective roles in the mountain society and their relation-

225 The Young Druze Professional website: www.ydo.org.
226 Author's interview with Zena Arnouz, August 10, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon.

ships with the mostly Druze population residing in the region.

The Irfan Establishment has various branches around "Druzestan", with its headquarter in the town of Simqaniyye. The Irfan Establishment was founded in 1973 by a group of religious figures from the Chouf, "because the Chouf is the main place for the Druze and there was no such establishment. We needed one."[227] During the civil war the establishment expanded to all Lebanese regions with Druze inhabitants: Abey, Aley, Sawfar, Simkanieh, Rashaya, Hasbaya, Shahhar. The organization mainly founds schools, though it established a hospital in the Chouf region in 1980. The schools provide students with the opportunity to have an education in line with the Lebanese curriculum, while also teaching principles of the Druze philosophy. Health services for the needy are for free, positively contributing to the association's reputation in the region; only people that can afford medical fees are charged, by policy. The establishment receives donations and support, especially from Walid Jumblatt, to the point that "without him this institution would not work."[228]

The Ainwazein Hospital has the dual objective of helping the needy of the mountain region by subsidizing rates and providing jobs to nurses and doctors of the region. The latter objective is an attempt to create work for members of the community, in order to keep the members of the community close to the community stronghold–an observed trend exercised by many of the discussed associations.

The last institution is the Druze Orphanage headed by the Nakadi family. The orphanage was established by the late Arif al-Nakadi in 1968 with donations from the late Hussein Azzam. Funding is also received from the Ministry of Social Welfare and from private individual donations. Nowadays, the orphanage hosts more than nine hundreds chil-

227 Author's interview with sheikh Sami Abil Mona, June 7, 2007, Simqaniyye, Lebanon.
228 Ibid.

dren from ages two to twenty-one. The institution provides a vocational school with a dormitory, laboratories and workshop spaces, with training in mechanics, electricity and electronics. Other than its name, an obvious indicator, the orphanage's Druze identity is evident from a number of factors. Firstly, it is located in the same area as one of the most important Druze shrines in Lebanon; Secondly, the first eight hundred places are reserved for members of the community from all around Lebanon; only in the case of vacancy are children from other communities accepted. However, though the orphanage is strictly Druze, it is not part of the *waqf*, as the Nakadi family owns it.

The main difference between the first two institutions and the latter is that the formers are more open in to other confessional communities. Regardless, the main objective of all three institutions remains the same–to aid the needy of the Druze community and offer them employment opportunities.

Each of these institutions is structured around various committees, with a Board of Trustees that decides upon organizational policies. With the exception of the Irfan Establishment,[229] the majority of the funds are received from private donors of the Druze diaspora.

3.Remarks on Druze CBOs

The analysis of the web of Druze based community organizations, although incomplete, is a good representation of Druze communality and is useful in highlighting the institutions prerogatives and role they play within the Druze public sphere.

The associations with "individual character"– associations do not

229 According to Khuri, the majority of community donations go to macro-institutions. Khuri, F. I. (2004). *Being a Druze*. London: Druze Heritage Foundation, pp. 167-172.

recognize themselves as strictly Druze – are strongly connected the residential territory of the community. However, the ideological precepts of the community are transferred into the associations' endeavors due to the strong presence of communitarian identity amongst the individuals comprising these associations. The welfare and environmental associations follow in line with this analysis, as they both work towards the provision of a better condition of life for those living in the setting of their actions – the majority of which are Druze inhabitants. Considering the strict relationship of the Druze community to the territory, it is not surprising that such organizations attempt to stop urban migration by improving the conditions of life within in the territory. Organizations that deemed themselves inter-confessional, characterized by a strong Druze base and inclusive belonging, work in a space that is strictly communitarian though the overarching goal is to act within the national sphere. In other words, they inform the population about issues that concern the entire Lebanese nation, even if they do this in predominately Druze regions. While it is possible to discern criticism towards the national system, it is not so easy to detect open criticism addressed towards the communitarian sphere. With The Lebanese House Establishment for Environment, for example, it is important to underline that many debates and lectures are organized around issues of citizenship and national identity that marginalizes the principle of "good networking" in order to allocate local responsibility to the members of the organization. Besides the importance shown to the land, the other leading incentive of these associations is to help the less fortunate in an attempt to create a equality between men and women–concepts which are inline with the Druze philosophy. Other organizations also attempt to stop urban migration, though from a more communitarian perspective and with the overriding objective to reduce the danger that the results from migration away from the communitarian land, which debilitates the community in general. The fear of being out-

numbered by other communities inhabiting the territory is felt by many of the Druze members, as observed through informal conversations with many Druze member of the community.

The charitable organizations and the networks for mutual help are not attempting to develop any kind of critical role towards the Lebanese political system, neither on a national level nor on a communitarian one:

> "The Lebanese political system is communitarian, and it is implicitly asking each individual to work in the best way for its community. I think that from our associations we are doing our best for our community, then other will do the best for their own community."[230]

The only exception is the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare that, along with other national associations, monitors the bills of the government within the national parliament in order to assure a democratic allocation of funds. Considering that the audience of these organizations is mainly Druze, and that membership to some organizations is reserved to Druze only, is possible to then label these organizations Community Based Organizations (CBOs). These associations, institutions or macro-organizations have a role within the community sphere, which is to create a network of people that help the community grow stronger with respect to the other Lebanese communities. Many of these associations are grounded in the idea of networking, exemplifying a strong clientelistic presence within the community sphere. Besides the fact that their actions are aimed toward the needy, the beneficiaries of such a system are those belonging to the middle class as they attempt to organize a social network that in the Lebanese structure results often important.[231]

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230 Author's interview with Fuad El-Rayess, July 28, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon.

231 A similar idea is advanced by Janine Clark in her study on the web of social-charitable organizations in Jordan. See: Clark, J. A. (2003). *Islam, Charity and Activism*.

4. Criticism, Communal Individuals and the Communitarian Society

As a preliminary observation of the role of the organizations analyzed above, it seems that they are exempted from developing a critical role within the community public sphere; instead, their guidelines are related to the idea of solidarity within the community. First of all, it is necessary to underline that the analysis of the communitarian society had a more investigative goal to verify the presence of organizations with a strict socio-political approach toward community. What was instead found was a wide web of organizations that cover social, environmental and charitable functions. The political is missing. The only strictly political elements are found in the political parties, feudally structured around specific leader, that represent the community on a national level. It seems necessary to question if the absence of such a critical stance is a consequence of the Lebanese confessional system. However, such considerations shall be left to the conclusion of this study, as it is not in the main scope of research.

At the beginning of this section, an analysis of a small portion of Druze working in the so-called national civil society was proposed. A series of informal interviews with such individuals demonstrated the role they play within the communitarian public, although in many cases a critical stance towards communal authorities or informal leaders of the community is neglected and lacking. The apparent contradiction is that these individuals work in a national civil society and that most of them publicly criticize communities' leaders in the national sphere. In certain cases, the community sphere is neither questioned as a public entity, nor as an entity that could be helpful in expanding and developing the diverse Lebanese public sphere. Another contradiction lies in the fact that the majority of these individuals are perfectly aware that the control and leadership of the community is far from democratic; they nevertheless assume

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Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

a passive position of acceptance towards the primordial structure of the community. Many members of the community assume that discussing the leaders of the community is a form of betrayal, making such an issue public taboo. The position of the leaders within the community is firm and unquestionable. The only realm in which leaders could potentially lose support is the economic, as it has direct repercussions on the quality of life of community's members. In reality, even members working outside the community on a national level, expect Walid Jumblatt, now part of government, to bring money and investments to the mountain region to improve infrastructure for the residence. Many of them also confirm that even though community leaders are not representative of their positions, they will vote for them, as it is better to conserve a cohesive and strong community than to create a fragmented one.

According to the previously mentioned LCPS, the Druze organizations in Beirut area are considered "real, existing, functional and democratic."[232] The importance of these associations within the community sphere is evident, as is their internal democratic structure; the important question is if these organizations, especially in a system such like the Lebanese in which the community acts as the intermediary between the individual and the state, are developing a critical attitude towards community authorities in order to expand their own community public sphere.

While reviewing a book written by the late Fuad I. Khuri, I stumbled upon a case of an association of volunteers, the Central Bureau for Druze Associations that caught my attention. The association was established in the Eighties during the midst of the civil war, by young, politically neutral members of the community; the main objective of the association, in such a difficult moment for the community and the entirety of Lebanon, was to create an office that would collect all donations to be delivered to

232 Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS). Civil Society in Beirut: A Working Paper. 1996. p. 83.

the community. The association enjoyed popular visibility for its ability to manage the funds. At that time, the leaders of the community Jumblatt and Arslan intervened and suggested the extension of the Executive Committee to include members of their family in equal proportion. During the first meeting of the new committee, it was decided to further extend the committee to twenty-eight people. As a direct consequence, the original founders all left the association that was then managed by only the two Druze families and their affiliates, as it still is today (Khuri, 2004, pp. 153-154). Some of the communal individuals interviewed suggested similar practices nowadays:

> "A person cannot create an NGO nowadays, because the elites of the community would not allow such person to help someone else from within the community without them as intermediary."[233]

Sheikh Nizam Bou Khzam also considers the liaison of his association to the community elites:

> "Our association was established in 1999 with an inter-confessional point of view, even if our work is directed to a territory that is mostly Druze. Step by step, and thanks to the projects we realized and the increasing interests of the people, the association started obtaining a discrete visibility. In that moment the community elites came to us asking which kind of projects were we developing."[234]

Sheikh Nizam expresses another meaningful consideration:

233 Author's interview with Amal Aburafeh Rawda, July 22, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon.
234 Author's interview with sheikh Nizam Bou Khzam, August 10, 2005, Kfra Khim, Lebanon.

> "We are working in Chouf that is a territory under Mr. Jumblatt "jurisdiction" and it is necessary a certain "support" or "protection" if we want to call in this way, by the leaders of the community. If you work in this area, the Chouf, and you don't have the approval of Walid Jumblatt, difficultly your association will be able to work seriously."[235]

Not all representatives of the studied associations share this same perspective on liaisons with the elites, though such attitudes could be interpreted as an absence of a critical internal stance. During the interviews such issues were not directly engaged by the interviewed, suggesting a lack of interest in discussing the relation with elites and community leaders. In certain cases the interviewed recognized "intrusions" by the leaders of the community, as confirmed by Ghazi Jounblat of the Druze Foundation for Social Welfare:

> "The elites do not directly intervene in the affairs of the foundation, but they are interested in what we are doing and they give some advices. They don't help us economically, but as we are working under the name of the community we need a certain "support"."[236]

Walid Jumblatt's role in the system of the mountain seems dominant. Many of the persons interviewed fear that if Walid Jumblatt is brought down, then the community will follow. With regards to the structure of the Lebanese system and the mountain society, Walid Jumblatt seems like a necessary intermediary for the members of the community, including those that enjoy economic independence:

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235 Author's interview with sheikh Nizam Bou Khzam, August 10, 2005, Kfra Khim, Lebanon.
236 Author's interview with Ghazi Jounblat, August 16, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon.

> "Even if I am independent and even if I am writing an article which will not be 100% for Walid Jumblatt, the link that you have within the community oblige you to deal with him. Every week we exchange calls, because we have lot of related interested. This is the structure of our system."[237]

The leadership of Walid Jumblatt in the Chouf and within the community permits him to be at the top of the patron-client system that was eradicated all around Lebanon; he plays a predominant role in the system's management, especially in the land of the Druze.

> "I am the head of hospital in the Chouf (Ainweizen) and sometimes Jumblatt asked for some "helps", in order to make me hire someone close to him in my hospital. Sometimes it was possible cause the person was qualified, but in other cases no. So one time seems that he was going to force me. So I went there to talk with him and I told him: "Look if are you forcing me to do this I will do, but I will come each month here to ask you for the bill."[238]

El-Halabi confirmed that he did not receive more pressure after that. However, it is also evident that not all the members of the community can display such independence that is grounded on a personal accumulation of wealth that permits the interlocutor to refute the patron-client relationship. Jumblatt's family party the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), has its own social, educational and environmental organizations that can easily assemble many members of the community.[239]

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237 Author's interview with Abbas El-Halabi, June 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
238 Ibid.
239 Amongst the associations are the Walid Jumblatt Foundation For University Studies, the Progressive Intellect Forum, Farah Social Foundation, Progressive Women Union (PWU), the Progressive Graduates Organization (PGO), the Progressive Scout Organization (PSO) and the Progressive Youth Organization (PYO).

> "I am providing with assistance, scholarships, job when I can, social welfare. We have our own system in the party that is trying to provide maximum of services. We have some NGOs that serve the community on a social and medical level."[240]

The roles of the elites and leaders of the community seem so predominant in the mountain region, especially in the lives of the community members. This section focused on the predominant role Walid Jumblatt plays within the community; however, it is possible to suggest that Arslan and Wahab also share a similar role within the community as they too have influence in other specific areas.

Fuad I. Khuri ends his chapter on the role of the elites within the Druze community by affirming that while waiting for real democratic system in Lebanon, community leaders can provide for the needs of their community members through the social network that they administer. From the perspective adopted in this study, it seems that such community leaders are in fact the main beneficiaries of this kind of system, and that any "democratic" reform must also come from within the community sphere.

Finally, it is possible to pose some "justifications" concerning the attitude of Druze leaders as well as communal individuals. The Druze community is a very small one that does not accept new members, and traditional practices such as endogamy still a reality. Such conditions make any form of criticism of the leaders, an act of treason and disrespect to the community. The role of the leaders within the community highlights their influence over its members and their interference in their affairs, either in the case of strictly Druze organizations or of Druze individuals leading inter-confessional organizations or that work on the land of

240 Author's interview with Walid Jumblatt, September 8, 2007, Moukhtara, Lebanon.

the community. The "fear" of the community's collapse, exploited by the elites, is basically aimed at strengthening the traditional structure of clientelism.

> "What we call in Arabic *fasah*, it is the fear. In every election, the leaders of the various communities go to the people and they tell them that we are in danger. They transmit the fear of other community to create polarization and make them win the elections. Every time is the same game in order to make you scare of the other. You will have fear and you will be more attached to the community."[241]

C. Druze Community Institutions

In the aftermath of Hariri's assassination an important uproar arose around the reform of the main Druze community institutions. The issues comprising the reform, though left unresolved previously, where accelerated after the death of Rafik Hariri and the formation of the new Cabinet ruled by the 14th of March bloc majority. As previously mentioned, the June 2005 elections had a direct consequence on the occupation of the Druze representation in the national parliament, which was completely filled by the Progressive Socialist Party block. The debate concerning the reform of Druze institutions was constantly mentioned in the national sphere in years to come, focusing on the reform of the Druze Council (*al-majlis al-madhhabi lil taifa al-durziyya*) and the election of a new *sheikh al-aql*. The debate resulted in the reformation of the Druze Council and the election of a new *sheikh al-aql*, though not without strong internal controversy. The personal status law, the final factor characterizing the realm of the official community institutions, has been recently consid-

241 Author's interview with Abbas El-Halabi, June 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

ered though from a more lenient perspective. The following section will attempt to analyze these institutions and the debate around their renewal, followed by a deeper analysis of the personal status law from a gendered perspective.

1. The Communal Trojka: Druze Courts, *Sheikh al-aql* and *Majlis al Madhhabi*

The three main Druze institutions that shape the communitarian sphere are the Druze Courts, the Druze Community Council with its relative prerogatives, and *sheikh al-aql*, the highest legal authority within the community and head of the Druze Council.

The Druze personal status law, drawn from the family law established by al-Amir al-Sayyid in the fifteenth century, was institutionalized on the 24th of February of 1948.[242] The personal status law is comprised of 172 articles divided into nineteenth chapters that cover: the law of marriage, dissolution of marriage, custody of children, maintenance of relatives, guardianship, appointment and duties of executors, interdiction, missing persons, paternity, testate and intestate succession and *waqf* (Anderson, 1952a, pp. 1-9; Anderson, 1952b, pp. 83-94). During the Ottoman Empire the Druze community had some sanction and autonomy concerning matters of divorce, marriage and succession. Beside the establishment of the Druze personal status law in 1948, it is necessary to add three more laws that regulate the Druze judiciary system and that have been promulgated in the years between 1960 and 1962; these laws concern the organization of the Druze courts, the Druze Council and the election of the spiritual head of the community. The personal status law, valid

242 Nissim Dana, *The Druze in the Middle East. Their Faith, Leadership, Identity and Status*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton, 2003, pp. 85-96; Betts Robert Brenton, *The Druze*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988.

for all the other Lebanese communities, allows religious courts to handle the aforementioned matter of members of the community. Although in name they represent an integral part of the Ministry of Justice, the courts handle these matters almost entirely independently (Khuri, 2004, p. 132). Druze courts are located in six different areas in Lebanon where Druze inhabitants are dominant: Aley, Chouf, Metn, Rashaya, Hasbaya and Beirut. The Druze judiciary is comprised of the six judges of the respective courts, the head of the Supreme Court, two consultants and a representative of the public attorney. The government is represented by an attorney that checks the maintenance of public order; the attorney is a civil judge and also Druze, though formally working for the state.[243] The *sheikh al-aql* is the highest rank with in the Druze court and is also the head of the Druze Community Council.[244] The *sheikh al-aql* is not the highest Druze religious authority as that position is reserved for the *sheikh al-masheikh*; he is just an intermediary between the state and the Druze community.

The Druze Community Council and the *sheikh al-aql* are strictly related. Founded in 1962, the Council is theoretically the institution that should assume legislative authority within the community; it currently manages the economical and administrative affairs of the Druze organizations, particularly the incomes of the *waqf*, the proprieties of the communities, as well as its shrines and sanctuaries. The Council is composed of religious and civil members of the community and its political profile need to be analyzed in depth.

243 Author's interview with Noed Hariz, July 4, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
244 The Druze Community Council is also labeled as the Druze Denominational Council.

2. Wind of Change: the *Sheikh al-aql* and the Druze Council

Literature on the Druze community often aims at presenting the figure of the sheikhs, the religious men of the community, as the "upholders of ethic" that "withdraw from factional politics and represent themselves as the voice of consensus" (Khuri, 2005, p. 62). They are represented as people that intervene in cases of conflict between communal factions as they work to resolve internal troubles and make the community more cohesive:

> "Few months ago exploded a fight in a Druze village here in the Chouf between two different Druze factions. The people of the village called me to go there urgently and so when I arrived there I met with the representatives of both factions, I listened their claims and I was able at the end to find a solution."[245]

The sheikhs, that Khuri labels as "free-lancer" of the Druze faith, do not fit into a formal hierarchy though there are different grades and positions that resemble a pyramidal structure, making it very clear that the religious are not a body of equal ranks.

The *sheikh al-aql* is basically a political appointee whose election could be cause of controversy and disagreement among different Druze factions. Until 2000, it was possible to elect two *sheikhs al-aql*, as in other Druze communities of the region, due to the presence of two main families – Arslan and Jumblatt – within the community in Lebanon. In 2000 the law changed, permitting the election of only one *sheikh al-aql*. Traditionally and historically, the *sheikh al-aql* normally has close ties to one of the powerful families. For this reason, it is possible to say that like the *sheikh al-aql*, the more "simple" sheikhs do not only mingle in religious

245 Author's interview with sheilh Sami Abil Mona, June 7, 2007, Simqaniyye, Lebanon.

issues. In some particular cases, as during the civil war, they also formed their own independent militia (Khuri, 2005, p. 136). Most sheikhs interviewed for this study either formally or informally, where clearly "affiliated" with one of the two main Druze families, either in their words or in their actions. The public presence of sheikhs with political leaders of the community is clearly a symbol of legitimacy for the national public and for members of the community. The many pictures of the large number of Druze sheikhs at the funeral of Rafik Hariri where predominant; other funerals commemorating the "martyrs" of the March 14th bloc were also always assisted by affiliated groups of Druze sheikhs. *Emir* Arslan is almost always releasing interviews to television channels in which he is surrounded by old white bearded sheikhs.

The newly appointed *sheikh al-aql*, Naim Hassan, in the midst of intense polarization within the country that also reflects the divide within the Druze community, clearly underlines his support for Walid Jumblatt, one of the two poles involved in the dispute.[246] Before Rafik Hariri's assassination, the following elections and the successive changes in the law of the Druze community, the former *sheikh al-aql* was Bahjat Ghaith, a sheikh with a business background and many assets in the Chouf region; he was directly appointed by the late *sheikh al-aql* Muhammad Abu-Shaqra in 1991. Contrary to the norm, the Druze political elite was not consulted for his election, provoking a stalemate in Druze institutions and causing wide dispute with regards to his role, which evidently forged a unity between the two political families in an attempt to substitute him.[247] Many members of the community explained the stalemate of the

246 Zeineddine, M. (2007, January 26). Spiritual leader of Druze community underlines support for Jumblat. *The Daily Star*; Le cheikh Akl réaffirme que le gouvernement est « légitime » et demande aux Libanais de « résister ». (2007, February 21). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

247 Craze, J. (1999, September 13). Jumblat, Arslan unite against their spiritual leader. *The Daily Star*; Hajj, D. (1999, October 2). Ghaith wins show of official support. *The*

Druze institutions for this reason. According to Ghazi Jounblat, as well as many other members of the community, the stalemate of the Druze institutions until 2005 occurred because:

> "The Council no longer had an effective function, because it was used in order to control the economical affairs of each organization and it was under strong pressure from certain foreign countries. For this reason now is not working anymore, but it is one of our main goals to reform it, elect new representatives and shape it as a kind of parliament of Druze organizations."[248]

Hence in December of 2005, the Druze bloc gathered around Walid Jumblatt, who displayed strength by obtaining all eight Druze seats in Parliament as well as comprising of the majority of the new ruling coalition in parliament, to propose a draft law that would change the internal community law. The law, drafted on December 6th, proposed that all Druze in Lebanon carry out the election of the Druze Council, instead of being decided upon by the highest Druze religious authority. In the next section, the importance of such a "democratic" step will be considered.

The reform of this internal Druze law needed to be ratified by the President of the Republic, Emile Lahoud, who, siding with the opposition, denied the draft law.[249] Consequently, a double proposal was passed in the Parliament, as is the norm if the president does not sign a law. The election to reform the *majlis al madhhani* by the members of the

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Daily Star; Farhat, S. (1999, October 12). Gaith strikes back with protest to retain control over endowments. *The Daily Star*.

248 Author's interview with Ghazi Jounblat, August 16, 2005, Beirut, Lebanon. Its inactivity is mainly interpreted as a direct influence of the state in the affairs of the community. See: Le Monde Dossier, *Le réveil des Libanais*, 31/03/2005;

249 Chahine, J. (2006, January 7). Druze press on with new internal law despite Lahoud's rejection. *The Daily Star*; Druze leader shoots down Lahoud's objections to law. (2006, January 09). *The Daily Star*.

community by the end of September 2006 coincided with the election of a new *sheikh al-aql*, sheikh Nasreddine al-Gharib, appointed by Arslan, who opposed the new law.[250] Between the September 25th, the date of the election, and November 12th, the day that the committees of the new Druze Council were formed, the Druze reformed the institutions of the community. The *sheikh al-aql*, Naim Hassan, formally took his seat on November 5th. The new *majlis al madhhabi* became comprised of eighty-eight people, a composition based on a dual aspect that takes into consideration the liberal profession on one side, and regional belonging on the other. Of these eighty-eight, sixty-eight where elected by the community following a division under different categories of professionalism: lawyers, graduates, engineers, industrials, etc.; among them are sixteen religious representatives elected from four different areas; the twenty remaining members of the Council are the ministers, nine judges and eight members of the parliament.[251]

The main issue under debate was the urgent implementation of the *waqf*, the proprieties of the community. The election of a committee for the implementation of the *waqf*, to which Abbas El-Halabi was appointed as head, was going to replace the Council of the Tutors of the Waqf, which was established in October of 1999 (El-Halabi, 2005, pp. 83-84).[252] Many of the Druze communal individuals interviewed, dis-

250 Arslan decries law ousting Ghaith (2006, May 08). *The Daily Star*; Zeineddine, M. (2006, September 26). Lawyer sues spiritual leader named by Arslan. *The Daily Star*; Arslane : « Si la nouvelle loi est appliquée, la communauté druze aura deux cheikhs Akl ». (2006, May 6). *L'Orient – Le Jour*; Arslane : Nous élierons notre propre cheikh Akl druze si l'on ne parvient pas à une entente. (2006, September 18). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

251 Author's interview with sheikh Sami Abil Mona, June 7, 2007, Simqaniyye, Lebanon. See also: Zeineddine, M. (2006, October 16). Recently elected Druze council chooses new spiritual leader. *The Daily Star*; Zeineddine, M. (2006, November 6). Druze council installs new sheikh aql. *The Daily Star*; Zeineddine, M. (2006, November 13). Druze council elects officers, fills committees. *The Daily Star*.

252 On the *waqf* in the Druze community, see: Khuri, F. I. (2004). *Being a Druze*.

played clear signs of hope in the newly reformed Council, believing it would start an ameliorating and strengthening processes of change within the community as well as better implementation and use of community property. Many where concerned with the importance of such an institution in creating a space of debate within the community and addressing cases of claim, which was not possible to achieve with the previous *majlis* due to immobility. The role of women within the community, which will be analyzed in the next paragraph, will better highlight this issue.

3. Remarks On Community's Institutions

In the last three years, the Druze community assisted with remarkable changes and reform to internal community institutions. The election of a new *sheikh al-aql* in November 2006 and the concomitant reform of the *majlis al madhhabi*, the Druze Council, where accomplished in order to improve the common good of the community. The presence of functioning institutions and the recognition of the presence of an addressable figure are important tools with regards to the expansion and development of debate and action within the communal public realm.

The new government selected in the election of June 2005, was a wind of change for the community. Considering the strong political connotations of the previously mentioned institutions and figures, it is important to inquire how it is possible to consider these changes within the Druze community. As was done on a national level, by questioning the outcome of the Cedar Revolution in terms of freedom and restoration, it seems necessary to question if such changes on a community level are considered effective reforms that act for the common good of the community, or that have a clear political agenda, solely representing a transfer of political power. Less than one year has passed since the inauguration of

London: Druze Heritage Foundation, pp. 177-178.

the new *sheikh al-aql* and the formation of the committees that comprise the Druze Council; and thus it seems too early to judge progress. The control of these institutions passed from the hands of the former sheikh, Bahjat Ghaith, and a confrontation between the two main families of the community and the religious deities, to a situation in which the control of these institutions is mostly in the hands of the Jumblatt family, with strong opposition by Arslan. The change can be regarded as a reconciliation between communal religious figures and political leaders, that until recently wanted to dismantle such institutions in order to weak the religious power within the community.

These mentioned issues were very visible in the national public sphere, which evidently became the stage for the confrontation between the two Druze families. The role the national public sphere played could be the consequence of the fact that the *sheikh al-aql* is the official intermediary between the community and the state. Another reason explaining such visibility on a national level is the fact that the new draft law had to be counter-signed by the President of the Republic, Emile Lahoud; such a step became the umpteenth reason for the ongoing fight between the opposition and majority, placing the reforms of the Druze community into the framework of political polarization characterizing Lebanon recently. Such an entrance into the national sphere and the consequent polarization resulted in two main positions on the issue: one side considered the functionality of the institutions, while the other side loudly claimed the majority was occupying the Druze Council. Because the issue was brought into the national political struggle, it is difficult to objectively understand the situation, especially after such a short time. It is not far fetched that the control of the *majlis* and the election of an affiliated *sheikh al-aql* clearly legitimizes the March 14th bloc from a national perspective, in claiming that the Druze belong to the majority, and from a communal perspective, by gaining legitimacy and visibility within the

community. It is interesting to mention that the debate on the Druze institution in the national sphere received no intervention by outside actors or communities. It is symptomatic of the consideration that internal communal affairs are sacred issues that need be debated only within the community.

On a community level it is possible to suggest that the debate around the new draft law, involved just the elite and the politicians of the community.[253] The participation of the Druze opposition, represented by Arslan and his supporters, in the debate is also questionable, as they did not completely agree on such reforms. It is also necessary to put the interrogative mark on the possibility that the changes came from an un-debated process by which the Druze "majority" displayed the power gained after the previous national elections.

Such considerations are strictly related to the elitist profile of the Druze Council and the analysis of this institution in terms of accessibility, considering that many labeled the Council as a little Druze Parliament. Although almost all the members of the community were allow to vote for their representatives, the strictly liberal, professional and elitist profile of all the candidates bring into question the role of "democratic" representation and action of the Council, highlighting that it is instead characterized by an exclusive approach.[254]

In conclusion, the creation of a functional institution within the community represents an important step in the extension of the community public sphere. What is necessary to question and take into consideration is the control by Druze political factions that risk to cause more stalemate

253 On the other side it is necessary to underline that the members of the community participated in the vote for the election of the new Druze Council. See: Ghazal, R. (2006, September 25). Druze hold unprecedented Religious Council elections. The Daily Star.

254 The previous *majlis* was characterized by elitist tendencies. See: Khuri, F. I. (2004). *Being a Druze*. London: Druze Heritage Foundation, pp. 178-179.

in such institution, that are just being used for political legitimacy and to develop factional political agendas.

D. Reclaiming Reforms Within the Community: Gender's Equality

1. Family Law and Woman Status Among the Druze

The Druze family law has often been presented as very modern and egalitarian with regards to for the roles of women and men. The Druze family law follows the Hanafi law (Basile, 1993, p. 141). A considerable part of the Druze family law concerns role, duties and the communal position of women with respect to, which will be the main focus of this section. It is not the objective of this section, or this study, to meticulously analyze the Druze family law or the cases in which women are in secondary positions within the community, as is the case within the entirety of Lebanese society. This section will expose the formal and informal rules that form the role of women within the community in order to question gender activism within the community.

Druze women have always been depicted as having special roles reserved within the community. Azzam underlines how literature on the Druze community, either by Druze or by non-Druze, often proposes an idealized image of the Druze woman as a pillar of the family and guardian of its morality, sometimes exaggerating the role of the woman in the public and political sphere of the community (Azzam, 1997, pp. 4-8). Such descriptions are helped by the deep egalitarianism that imbued the original *Tawhid* doctrine in terms of gender relations within the community. Azzam shows how the original Druze scriptures are based on a strong egalitarianism between men and women, and only centuries of *taqiyya* and the reinterpretation of the scriptures by the Emir Tanukhi in

the fourteenth century, led to a different interpretation (Azzam, 1997, pp. 22-42). Tanukhi's legacy is at the base of the actual Druze personal status law that was established in 1930 and institutionalized in 1948.

> "We may also reasonably argue that these epistles support gender equality in terms of social and religious obligations, the right to seek knowledge, free will and self-determination, and the full responsibility that every individual has for him/herself" (Azzam, 2007, p. 31).

Judge Noed Hariz, Head of the Druze Supreme Council, discusses the perception of the privileged legal role of women within the community, especially when compared to other Muslim communities:

> "Our personal status law is very good, very near to the civil status. We differ to the other Lebanese communities. Marriage and divorce are made by the judge, not by a religious figure. The wife can ask for divorce equally as the man. Every one takes his part of responsibility, and definitely woman and man status is very egalitarian."[255]

Azzam's work, which will be taken into consideration in the next section, focuses on the difference between the egalitarian aspects of the Druze doctrine and the reality of Druze women within the community, a reality dominated by different social practices and by a strong patriarchal structure.[256] Azzam indicates the role of ancient social practices as the main cause of this condition and focuses part of her data on the physical and psychological violence committed by men to women. The

255 Author's interview with Noed Hariz, July 4, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
256 I believe that Azzam does not consider such patriarchal structures within Lebanon. For this reason, most of her data and examples also apply to the various Lebanese communities.

communal activists that will now be analyzed avoid such strict focus on violence though they share many common points with Azzam's study and suggestions.

2. Lobbying for Gender's Equality Within the Community

Anissa al Najjar is a "94–year–old young lady" (so she defines herself) and is a very active figure on both a national and communitarian scene. A widow of a former Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, she lobbied with the Moghaizel couple in the early fifties to achieve women's suffrage. Mrs. al Najjar is still very active, especially with the Village Welfare Society that she heads. The organization does not have a defined Druze communal stance, though it works to create awareness amongst women in the mountain society. Al Najjar's work oscillates from a national, interconfessional direction to a more Druze-specific one, with special focus on women's rights. Many Druze women gather around her, especially in her house in Verdun, Beirut, just in front of the "Druze House" in order to define issues of women's rights within the community that should be raised in front of the Druze authorities and institutions.

> "Most of the women that gathered in my house and that were working with me are very well educated persons and mainly are professionals, teachers or just mothers. Unfortunately there are no "ordinary" Druze women among us, and they are mostly from the city and not from the mountain. For example, the day of October 2007 that we arranged the meeting with the new elected *sheikh al-aql*, only one of the forty women that surprisingly appeared for the appointment was from the mountain."[257]

Such female Druze activism is related to the birth of the reformed Druze

257 Author's interview with Anissa al Najjar, October 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

Council in 2006. As soon as the new Druze Council and *sheikh al-aql* were inaugurated, Druze women considered directly advancing their claims to the higher Druze figure.

> "We think that the new *sheikh al aql* is a very wise man, not like the one before that blocked the institutions. Before it did not have sense to contact him in order to reform woman status within the community. No one was responsible for the community, and so it was impossible to address anyone."[258]

The importance of the presence of functioning institutions is an important factor in the activism of Druze women. The relationship between functioning institutions, the election of a legitimate figure of reference for the community, and lobbying is a very strict one. The legitimacy of the reformed council is in part due to the creation of a committee in charge of women affairs that is headed by a well-known Druze woman. The main focus of such activism claims women's rights from within the community:

> "It is necessary to claim for rights on a national level, but also on a community level. The main claims concern issues related to the laws and practices of inheritance and divorce within the community. The Druze community has a very progressive law of personal status, but such laws are not working. There are these rights on paper, but no one applied them. The idea is to stabilize equality within the community with reference to the law that we have."[259]

The main focus of women's rights for al Najjar is on the application of the laws concerning divorce and inheritance.

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258 Ibid.

259 Author's interview with Anissa al Najjar, October 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

> "For example in the Druze laws there is nothing well defined on the issue of divorce with children, and so most of the time the judges follow the Hanafi law, that is the effective Muslim law, and they applied it through their own interpretation."[260]

Anissa al Najjar illustrated the problem with a clear example:

> "There was a young 21-years-old woman that was married and had two children. The husband suddenly decided to divorce from her and without apparent reasons. So he managed to leave nothing for her but just the money for the education of the two children, that anyway are not taking into consideration the difficulty in growing up two children and the other related expenses. Even the judge did not call to the court to ask for her reasons or her claims. The point is that the woman was also belonging from a good known family, but it did not help in provide her with the rights she deserved."[261]

Another of female Druze activists is May Abu Hamdan, who, in a lecture in Beirut in September 2007, addressed the main claims and necessary amendments that needed to be undertaken with regards to the personal status law within the Druze community:

> "1. Develop and update the Personal Status Law in accordance with the jurisprudences and annotations of Al Tawhid (monotheism) in view of doing justice to women with regards to marriage, divorce, bequeathing, custody and alimony.
> 2. Raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years old in order to enable them to continue their education and secure their future.
> 3. Raise the minimum age of custody to 13 years for boys and 15 years for girls,

260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.

> and grant judges the authority to raise or lower the custody age according to the interest of the child under guardianship. The competent mother shall have the right of preference for their custody, especially the custody of girls.
> 4. Bequeath the girl should the father die without leaving a will or having sons since the current law is based on the Hanafi School, which gives the paternal uncle the right to appropriate half the estate of his deceased brother.
> 5. Give the virtuous mother legal custody of the children after the death of the husband. The judge may determine the identity of the second custodian from her husband's family. I call upon all young girls and boys to adopt upon marriage a modern law based on the jurisprudences of Al Tawhid by adding a condition approved by the fiancés and registered by the judge on the marriage certificate stipulating that any wealth occurring after marriage shall be equally divided during the marital life or upon separation, provided that the amount of the dowry remains low…"[262]

Even if equality is sanctioned on paper, the data collected by Azzam shows a reality that is characterized by a clear imbalance between the rights and prerogatives of women and men.
The other issue concerns inheritance. One of the main claims is to change the role of the judge in family disputes. Druze have a very open tradition in terms of will and inheritance.

> "The will for the Druze is freely made. Druze can give to strangers and people from other communities, that is not the case of the other Lebanese communities that mostly have to give it inside the family and the community."[263]

The latter point assumes a controversial character, because such "free-

262 Extract from May Abu Hamdan lecture in Beirut, September 21, 2007. See Appendix IV.
263 Ibid.

dom" could lead to a misuse of inheritance laws, especially by men towards their wives and daughters. Anissa al Najjar suggests that, "since the wills have to be registered in their office, judges should not accept those that prevent women from inheritance. This is one of the main issues that we discussed with the new *sheikh al-aql*."[264] The other controversial point is in case of the absence of a will before the death of the father or the husband; in such cases Druze family law follows the Muslim Hanafi law, that reserves one-eight of property to women in case of children, and one-fourth in case of no children–a reality that Druze activists consider unfair to women and not in line with the traditions of their community.

> "Can it be that this same woman, at bequeathing, is denied by her husband her right to the fortune along with her daughters, for he keeps it to himself and passes it on to his male children, no matter if they were rich or bad? After being the lady of the house, she becomes the abandoned and lives in the house of the separated, while others enjoy her fortune? Is this the Justice that Allah had prescribed? Some husbands even deny their wives and daughters from a legacy and leave their wealth to other relatives if they didn't have any sons."[265]

The issues that were here taken into consideration explain how traditional social practices are still predominant with respect to laws that are "recognized," though not applied.

3. Remarks on Women Communal Activism

> "Injustice lies in the way these laws are implemented and used for the benefit of

264 Author's interview with Anissa al Najjar, October 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
265 Extract from May Abu Hamdan lecture in Beirut, September 21, 2007. See Appendix IV.

the male society in order to subdue the woman and humiliate her."[266]

This section attempts to understand if it is necessary to lobby on a national level and communitarian level, in order to improve gender equality in the specific case of Druze women. It is important to ask if Druze activism for women's rights within the community is an important step towards the development of the public sphere, national or communal. Do communal individuals need to lobby on a national level only, or is it necessary to work within the community to reach gender equality? The following section attempts to illustrate the necessary role of active communal individuals on a community level in order to change the status of women, by either asking for a better functioning of the laws in terms of representation and visibility within the community.

In the case analyzed, it seems the main issues of concern are divorce and inheritance, which are strictly communal issues left to the prerogatives of the community, due to the confessionalism characterizing the Lebanese state. Although the state is not involved in such discussions, it is important to underline another incident mentioned by Anissa al Najjar during our interview that directly calls into cause the national sphere. Al Najjar mentioned that in the fifties, she lobbied with other activists with regards to equal rights on issues of inheritance. Such a claim was then approved by the Lebanese state and allowed for an intersection between the national sphere and the communal one.

On a community level, however, it seems as if the presence of functioning communal institutions is a fundamental prerequisite in the establishment of gender equality. On one hand, the institutions permit the identification of a figure to address claims to and, on the other hand, it allows for the consideration of possible representation within such institutions.

266 Extract from May Abu Hamdan lecture in Beirut, September 21, 2007. See Appendix IV.

Faced with poor applications of community laws and social practices, the claims of Druze women activists tend to rely on the structural forms of patriarchy, which characterizes Lebanese society. For this reason, it seems necessary to confront these issues within the community sphere, through the work of individuals active within the community who are able to create internal awareness around these topics. Education and awareness are two key words that need be taken into consideration from different perspectives, as they are reminiscent of the need to fill gaps within the community. Most activists that lobby for women's rights within the community are almost all "well-educated" people with professional profiles that tend to live in the capital Beirut. In order to fill the gap, "ordinary" people need be directly involved in such actions or at least, be made aware of their condition.[267] Such issues are strictly related to the deep divide between the society of the mountain and that of the city.

Such considerations unveil another issue that will be better analyzed in the next section pertaining to knowledge and accessibility. In her analysis of the condition of Druze women, Azzam underlines the paucity of religious knowledge of the community doctrine as the principle cause for the lack of egalitarianism: "Why don't we support each other to reform this law that was imposed on us since the year 1948 and to which no amendment had been brought until today?"[268] Mrs. Najjar and many other Druze communal individuals, often complain about similar issues, with specific regards to the absence of serious teaching of religion in schools and kindergartens. Such complains exemplify how important a general knowledge of the religious doctrine, still covered by secrecy, is to general awareness.

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267 The term, "ordinary" people, refers to the terminology used by Anissa al Najjar. This term makes it possible to consider the idea of "plebeian public sphere."

268 Extract from May Abu Hamdan lecture in Beirut, September 21, 2007. See Appendix IV.

E. The Druze Between Secrecy and Openness

The two general issues concerning communal individuals within the Druze community follow the divide along a religious and political line. On one hand the community's religious dogma, remains inaccessible by its members; at the same time active communal individuals within the community are impeded by still predominant feudal representation within the community. The mix of these two components results in necessary reform from within the community, through the publication of books and articles as the most public and representative channel.

1. Religious Accessibility

Until 1965, the holy scriptures of the Druze faith were hidden. The publication of a book quoting the secret scriptures represented a point of crisis, though at the same time the religious sphere opened within the community allowing space for discussion (Schenk, 2005, pp. 79-80). After such a controversial move, many other publications were published that interpreted the Holy Scriptures and Druze dogma (Azzam, 1997, pp. 33-37). Even if the scriptures were more accessible, religious knowledge within the community is still problematic, presenting many obstacles. The issue revolves around communitarian oscillation between secrecy and openness, which further plays on the contrast between public visibility of the difference between religious and non-initiate members of the community, and private performance of religious duties.

> "Each religion, however defined, contains two overlapping domains or fields of interaction, the public and the private. The public domain of religion involves rituals that are collectively performed in a standard way and according to a fixed schedule: they have a beginning and an end. In the private domain, on the other hand, religion is practiced by individuals in a more personal manner

> and it tends to follow no fixed schedule, neither in time nor in the actual performance of ritual. How these differ varies from one religion to another: what is considered to belong to the public domain in one religious tradition may be treated as private practice in another. Indeed, different religious traditions may be compared and contrasted on the basis of the divide between the public and the private. For example, whereas in Islam the pillars of religion, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and so on, are publicly required and performed, among the Druze they are privately observed. The difference between the two traditions is not entirely a matter of one group being open while the other is secretive; rather, the difference lies in their definitions of religious experience and knowledge, and the role that both play in human society" (Khuri, 2004, pp. 1-2).

Disillusion and frustration amongst members of the community is heightened, especially among uninitiated members – the *juhall* – that see themselves as unable to fully participate in the performance of their own communal identity as it lies in the hands of those with religious knowledge. It was determined through more talks of both a formal and informal nature that communal individuals complain about lack of "possession," even if the communal individuals at hand were layman or secular in terms of personal identity. Such difficulties in term of accessibility basically comes from the impossibility for uninitiated individuals to have access to some religious books, which brings into question the inner meaning of some religious principles of the Druze religion. One of the community members interviewed referred to the impossibility for him, as a member of the Druze diaspora, to buy books on the Holy Scriptures in a shop near a shrine in Mount Lebanon. Another interviewee remembers how, as a child, he would wait for his father to leave the house in order to steal into the library and scan books that he was not allow to read and that were not publicly published.

Such difficulty with regards to accessibility creates a certain sense dis-

content amongst members of the community, in terms of their personal approach to their religion. One interviewee stipulates:

> "I would like to know which is the ethic of daily life I should follow according to the religious dogma. Are there books or schools where I could learn such ethic? Unfortunately there is nothing like this. Here comes the main frustration."[269]

It is necessary to add that the pillars shaping dogma are sources of misinterpretation by the same Druze communal individuals. The diaspora community, that faces a problem of accessibility, took on an important role in initiating discussion on Druze identity. Members of the diaspora that returned to Lebanon face the social reality, particularly in the mountain-society that is not influenced by open discussions, so confirmed by interviewed members of community. Uninitiated members often have to personally search for forms of religious knowledge that does not come close to discussing the scriptures openly; rather it is a reaction to the condition of inaccessibility.

2. For a New Elite Facing Feudality

On a political level, the presence of a strongly rooted feudal representation provokes complaints from Druze communal individuals that find difficultly in publicly expressing their criticism. The role of traditional political representation is not at the base of public discussion, nor is it possible to find visible initiatives to compare to other aspects within the community. To many communal individuals, such feudal representation and leadership is related to both a lack of openness within the community, and a lack of diversity in terms of possible options of representation.

269 Author's interview with Manal Zahreddine, June 29, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

Abbas El-Halabi, vice-president of the BBAC bank and newly elected head of the *waqf* committee within the Druze Council, suggest that the Christian community is one "from whom all the other sects should learn from and use as an example of diversity within the community."[270] He goes on to say that:

> "The community is not so active unfortunately. What i wanted to emphasize in my book is an invitation to the elite of the community to be more active, because there is a big weight of the political leadership, feudal leadership, which make difficult any activity from the elite or from any part of the community who don't share their opinion with the feudal leadership. As you can see the feudal or the traditional leaders of the community are part of the state and the state encourages those people and would like to deal with them not with the whole community. Every community has one or two representative and it is easy for the state, for the government, to deal with one or two persons than dealing with the whole community. This lead to a problem, because individuals are not directly involved with the state, but through these people and vice versa. And this also led to give a big weight for the leader of the community. The situation is similar in all the community but especially in the Druze with a feudal representation shared between Arslan and Jumblatt. If you don't belong from one of them it is very tough to live as independent within the community. This is why myself like others, I am not alone, we are seeking to create an independent entity inside our community, not related to feudal leadership. I personally paid an heavy price for this, because they don't accept other people nor independent people."[271]

The main concern of El-Halabi seems to be the raising of a new elite within the community. "Elites deserve a voice within the community in

270 Author's interview with Abbas El-Halabi, June 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
271 Ibid.

order not to leave the community to the Jumblatt or Arslan clans. There should be a third voice. That is what Kamal (Jumblatt) tried to encourage."[272] Such focus on the elites presents a principal problem that is questionable from different points of view, especially if the complaints on the community sphere are regarded in terms of accessibility. On one hand, the idea of elite entails the traditional role of the *zu'ama*, though the new elite is calling on more "modern," "well educated" people. On the other hand, such a proposal leaves out what can here be defined as "ordinary," communal individuals, who in both cases have no real voice making of the community sphere an inaccessible realm for many members. The idea of modern/well-educated people will be revisited in the next section, while the role of "ordinary" people will be left to chapter eight.

Traditional leaders are necessary elements that allow communal individuals to be active within the community sphere. At the same time however, such traditional leaders still possess the necessary power to "protect" members of the community from dangerous situations.[273] Such contradictions are predominant amongst community members; even if they advance critical attitudes towards the traditional leaders, they vote for them and perceive these leaders as the embodiment of the community–displaying fear for the community's destruction and the idea that the community will not be weakened in the face of other communities.

272 Ibid.

273 During the Syrian presence in Lebanon, a Druze individual working in an international organization was arrested by the internal security forces and detained in their headquarters for many hours, without apparent reason. Although the individual is nowadays very critic toward the Druze feudal leadership, he relied on them to get him out of the troublesome situation. troubles.

3. Literature for Reform: A View from Inside the Community

The combination of a consistent feudal system and religious inaccessibility has assisted the creation of Druze literature from within the community. Such literature is important because it represents quite a new trend within the community, while also allowing the same members of the community to implicitly and directly create a means for public representation that allow certain issues related to the Druze community to surface. The importance of this literature is due to the fact that it comes from within, and introduces a form to discuss the sociological fabrics of the community and its dogma.

Literature from within the community is a very recent trend that, as briefly mentioned above, emerged in 1966 with the publication of Najjar's, "The Druze: Millennium Scrolls Revealed" (Azzam, 1997, pp. 33-37)**:**

> "First of all, Druze did not have the freedom to write about themselves until the second half of the twentieth century, following a serious controversy in the Druze community over the continuing viability of *al-taqiyya* in the context of the necessity of educating the next generation" (Azzam, 1997, p. 3).

The autonomous publication brought down the wall of secrecy around the community dogma, resulting in two main consequences: an increase in the amount of works concerning the Druze faith, and critical responses from other important, "high-up" figures of the community that attempted to publish interpretations of the dogma that were closer to a lived reality. Many times authors were patronized by figures of the community to provide more "realistic" perspectives, as is the case with Makarem's book, "The Druze Faith" (Azzam, 1997, pp. 33-37). The publications, which basically touch upon structural, religious and political issues within the

community, represent a public call for reform and an appeal for Druze individuals to change the reality of their situation. "Reform" is a key word in these publications that, according to these authors, needs to be related to ideas of freedom and democracy. These calls for reform, democracy and freedom are related to issues of modernity and improvement in education vis-à-vis the wide ignorance of the community members.

Between 2005 and 2007, the most important period in terms of this dissertation, three main books were published by members of the Druze community, which touch upon religious, political and structural matters. The books are: Les Druzes: Vivre avec l'avenir by Abbas El-Halabi, Gender And Religion: Druze Women by Intisar J. Azzam, and Anis Obeid's The Druze and their Faith in Tawhid.

At the basis of all three works is the personal perspective combined with the attempt to change the community's present-day reality. The latter aim is in fact overtly mentioned in the author's introduction in all three books: "Perhaps my own most compelling reason for writing this book is my personal need to understand and clarify the religious doctrine into which I was born and which has had a significant impact on my life" (Obeid, 2006, p. xii). Azzam also hopes that the data she collected "will serve as a starting point for future critical studies of Druze society" (Azzam, 2007, pp. xxiv). She leaves her personal incentive for the conclusion:

> "I would like to conclude by reiterating that I intended this anthropological study to be a form of cultural critique that was necessitated not merely by scholarly interest, but also by my own perception of and reflection on the contradictions that govern the experience of Druze women in Lebanon and women in general. It is my aspiration, therefore, to influence reality and contribute to possible forms of praxis by kindling further interest in research on the topics discussed in the present work and in all forms of cultural" (Azzam, 2007, pp. 216-217).

Abbas El-Halabi is not strictly calling for reform. However, he does touch upon sensitive issues within the book, such as: the still strong solidarity and obedience towards leaders of the community (El-Halabi, 2005, p. 89); the difficulty for members of the community to be independent from the leaders as they act as necessary intermediaries with the state (El-Halabi, 2005, p.90); "le culte du chef" (El-Halabi, 2005, p. 93); the incapacity of the community to renew its political class; the feudal structure and the lack of criticism within the community (El-Halabi, 2005, pp. 174-176); and the overwhelming feelings of solidarity that stifle critical stances and dissent within the community (El-Halabi, 2005, p. 183). "Je veille à rester très attentif à la vie des Druzes et à leur besoins, à entretenir une relation très intime avec les religieux de la communauté et à jouer un rôle actif dans la société civile" (El-Halabi, 2005, p. 27). Looking forward for to the future of the Druze community, El-Halabi focuses on modernity and the need for change:

> "Les Druzes, qui ont su traverser toutes ces étapes historique en conservant leur identité, doivent maintenant s'accommoder, comme toutes les autres communautés, d'un esprit de modernité et ne peuvent continuer à vivre en communauté « fermée »."(El-Halabi, 2005, p. 199).

El-Halabi also draws on direct examples from another non-Druze author, Bernadette Schenk, who is directly involved in the community and has many publications to her name. In one of her works Bernadette Schenk directly deals with changes and reforms within the community, considering the community's demand for internal reform of the patriarchal and undemocratic structures. According to Schenk, such demands attempt to reduce the uncontrolled political and/or religious power held by men that have attained their positions through traditional family means (Schenk, 2005). The focus on democracy within the community is not considered

in this study but is necessary to discuss as it appears in many mentioned writings. In a personal interview, El-Halabi discusses democracy with regards to the Druze community:

> "Only consider the Druze. I think for the wealth of the community, for the freedom of opinion and democracy. Our aim is to give everyone freedom to express everyone, and our system gives every communities guarantees. It is not the crisis of the institution, but of these people to make them accountable."[274]

Obeid and Azzam more readily touch upon religious issues in their respective works:

> "Now, however, the Druze path in Tawhid faith stands at crossroads. The compelling conditions of modern life present the followers of the Druze faith with the imperative of choice between two major paths. One is the traditional path: to maintain the status quo and preserve the tenets of the faith in the nascent form in which they were articulated, with little or no evolution over a thousand of years .The other is to choose the road of openness and evolution, knowing full well that change will not come without a price. Many members of the faith, particularly in the West but also in the East, are of the opinion that the need to evolve is urgent and the option of reform, unavoidable. They believe that the Druze path in Tawhid deserves to be interpreted and understood in a more scholarly historical context than has occurred thus far" (Obeid, 2006, p. XV).

> "Hence, there is hope that the Druze Personal Status Law will be revised at some future date to reflect further the Tawhid principles of equality and justice, which are fully compatible with existing democratic norms" (Azzam, 2007, p. 216).

The stance of these authors with regard to change, reform and modernity,

274 Author's interview with Abbas El-Halabi, June 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

makes it possible to introduce the concept of freedom within the community:

> "Finally, it should be emphasized that the real obstacle to change and development is fear: fear of autonomy and freedom that captures human beings in a cycle of ignorance-indolence-subjugation. Most people in dominant positions who benefit from a specific circumstance are unwilling to relinquish their privileges voluntarily: others passively obey the rules because change is perceived as threatening to stability and, thus, to security. The fear of change by dominant members of society is mainly expressed through opposition to freedom of thought and expression and by denying the potential of new perspectives and all attempts at change" (Azzam, 2007, p. 213).

The three authors also introduce two more issues: the "Western" mentality, and the role of educated members of the community in initiating the process of reform. Obeid, himself a member of the Druze diaspora, is a supporter of initiating change outside of the community's territory:

> "Doing so should open the way for members of the community to evaluate the current situation and embrace the imperative of reform. It is up to the Druze communities in the West to lead the way in this regard in view of the climate of free speech and objectivity that Western societies enjoy and offer" (Obeid, 2006, p. 209).

According to Schenk, well-educated people within the community define themselves as the representatives of:

> "A new Druze social elite that expressed its decided views in interviews and literary works. Owing to their intensive contacts with the world outside of the Druze community, they are confronted not only with other social, political and

> religious views and values, but also with discrimination, slander and defamation" (Schenk, 2005, p. 85).

Obeid is also conscious of such a role:

> "The educated class and thinkers in the Druze community have shunned dealing with religion in the past, preferring to remain within the safe heaven of the uninitiated, thus avoiding the burden of responsibility inherent in religious discourse. Present times, however, dictate a different posture. The opportunity to free the mind from the shackles of dogma and the suffocating hold of tradition should not be missed or deferred" (Obeid, 2006, p. 274).

The three authors also agree on the necessary presence of a critical perspective within the community in order to create and develop a public sphere that is based on communication among members of the community. Obeid, in fact, considers that one of the aims of his book is:

> "To initiate a dialogue within the Druze community, a dialogue that may pay the way to solutions to the many challenges that haunt the community and hinder its progress. The Druze community must recognize the need for reform and anticipate the trauma of breaking with long-established traditions and modes of thinking. It is a big challenge attested by many failed attempts at reform in the past" (Obeid, 2006, p. 266).

Obeid goes further than the simple idea of dialogue within the community; he indicates what the reality of the Druze public sphere should be in order to achieve internal reform:

> "Any community with a shared religious and cultural background needs to satisfy a few prerequisites for survival and development. These include at a

> minimum a place to meet, material for spiritual and moral expression, enlightened leadership to facilitate and guide the process, and support and active participation by the members of the community" (Obeid, 2006, p. 273).

These three authors, that are communal individuals but certainly not "ordinary" Druze, find that the best way to ask for reform and changes is through their writing, perhaps due to the lack of a real public space within the Druze community that allows for open discussions of such issues. The cons of such writs is represented by the fact such literature is only accessible by a few members within the community and is probably directly addressing the highly-educated members of the community in order to create a new movement of reform that, in any case, would difficultly and directly involve "ordinary" members. The relationship between such publications and the time during which this study was undertaken, may not seem directly related though it is worth considering.

VI. The Shiites

The events of spring 2005 caused the definitive and total engagement of the Shiite community in Lebanese politics. The process of political consciousness that started in 1974 when, in Baalbeck, Musa al-Sadr launched the Shiite *Harakat al-Mahrumin*, the Movement of the Deprived, seems to have now arrived at its definitive accomplishment in terms of engagement in Lebanese politics. The entrance of the major Shiite force, Hezbollah, on the Lebanese national stage as one of the official actors in the power-sharing system, sanctioned such progress and marked the period following the events of spring 2005. If, institutionally, for the first time in history Hezbollah members joined the government Cabinet, informally, Hezbollah's unified stance with the other major Shiite political party, Amal, made implicit the polarization in the country between the Shiites on one side and the other communities on the other. Such a unified stance between the two major Shiite parties made many a Lebanese believe that "the Shiites are the main problem" in Lebanon. Indeed, the complete participation of Hezbollah in Lebanese national affairs, hence leaving the previous position of an "anti-system" movement and a source of Lebanese resistance, begged the question of what special prerogatives that the Shiites, in particularly Hezbollah, were enjoying in Lebanon: the large possession of both arms and an army as well as the informal control over specific Lebanese territories.

The aim of this chapter is to tackle various issues related to the Shiite community in Lebanon, while also implicitly addressing the role of Hezbollah within the community. With its hegemonic role within the community, Hezbollah's new position in the Lebanese political system has perhaps been the most important subject discussed in the Lebanese public sphere in these years, both directly and indirectly and on national

and communal levels. This chapter will first present the evolution of the Shiite sociological community in terms of political consciousness, until finally placing it in today's reality. Then, considering the hegemonic place of Hezbollah within the community, it will be possible to, first, analyze the role played by the internal Shiite political opposition and, then, to advance considerations on the public space. The focus will then move to the analysis of the article of Mona Fayyad, because of its big impact on both national and communal levels. Last but not least, both the fatwa emitted by sheikh Afif Nabulsi and the consequent lawsuit filled against him by various Shiite communal individuals will be analyzed. This chapter will definitely take into consideration issues of internal criticism, the relation between the control of space and freedom of expression, and the role of informal authorities within the community that the state cannot hold accountable.

A. The Shiite Community: Political Aspirations and Public Focus

1. On the Road to Political Consciousness

The Shiites, the followers of the first Imam Ali, the husband of Prophet's daughter Fatima, are also called as the twelver, with reference to the twelve Imams. Ali represents the first Imam and the spiritual and political authority of the Shiites[275]. Shiite presence in Lebanon has been attested since the ninth century, especially in the mountains of Jabal Amil in the South and in the Bekaa valley, and as a small historical community in the costal city of Byblos. Due to the ruling presence of a Sunni Muslim majority in the region, Shiites had to practice *taqiyya* (religious dissimula-

275 Meanwhile only for Shiite Ali is considered as the first Imam, for the whole Muslim community he is considered only as the fourth Caliph.

tion) for a long time. In modern time, aside from the informal practice of *taqiyya* they practiced, the Ottoman rulers did not institutionally recognize them as a community and they were classified as part of the Sunni majority. During the Ottoman Empire, Shiites were excluded from public offices but their religious cities were permitted a great deal of latitude and autonomy (Ajami, 1986, p. 35). In concomitance with the Ottoman Empire's decline, the first *tanzimat* and the direct influence of European powers in Lebanon, Shiites started enjoying formal recognition. The first mark of institutional recognition came with the institution of the *mutasarrifiyya*, and the creation of a confessional Council, where the Shiite community held one seat. The institutional recognition of the Shiites as a confessional community did not help with improving their condition in the society, demoting their status for a long period of time. The French Mandate officially recognized the community in 1926 through the institutional recognition of the Jafari School of Jurisprudence as the law regulating the personal status of the members of the Shiite community. The census of 1932 and the King Crane Commission displayed the attachment of the Shiite community to the ideologies of Arab nationalism (Mervin, 2000). The Shiites demonstrated tremendous activity in the Arab nationalist movement in the beginning of the twentieth century, when the strong majority of the community was rejecting, in principle, the idea of being included in Greater Lebanon.[276]

From the Ottoman era to the 1960's, the political representation of the Shiite community in the Lebanese national sphere was exclusively represented by the local *zu'ama*. The division of the two major regional areas of Jabal Amil and Bekaa helped the creation of two different Shiite

276 On the role of Shiite from Jabal Amil within the Arab nationalist movement, see: Mervin, S. (2000). *Un réformisme chiite: Ulemas et lettres du Gabal 'Amil 'actuel Liban-Sud' de la fin de l'Empire ottoman a l'indépendance du Liban*. Beyrouth: CERMOC, pp. 331-380.

collectives not in strict relation one to another. Each of these collectives practiced a system of solidarity with a certain connotation of tribal competitiveness, and with the leadership of each of these two regions in the hands of "political families" (Beydoun, 2003, pp. 76-78). Such "political families" were basically a handful of feudal families, where the *beys* represented the descendants of these landed families (Ajami, 1986, p. 63). The National Pact of 1943, the official independence of the Lebanese entity, also marked the exclusion of the Shiites from the institutional construction of Lebanon, basically shaped by a Sunni Muslim and Christian Maronite agreement. Shiite *zu'ama* were not interested in the national sharing of power as much as they were interested in keeping the power in their local and regional constituencies. Osseiran, al Zayn and al Assaad were the main feudal families that were ruling in the Shiite regions, and the ones who were, through their clusters of smaller families, sending representatives to fill the seats reserved for Shiites in the national Parliament. The perfect example of the *za'im* and of these families was represented by al Asaad, first with Ahmed Bey and then with his son Kamel, who were both representing the office of the Speaker of Parliament, the highest Shiite office in the country, the latter of whom was representative until 1984 (Ajami, 1986, p. 64). At that time the "share" of the Shiite community was the share of the Shiite *zu'ama* (Binder, 1966, p. 301). If, on the one hand, independence gave direct power to the *zu'ama*, who were now directly connected to the state, it, on the other hand, also represented a threat to their undisturbed rule. Also, the increasing role of ideological political parties in post-independence Lebanon represented the main threat to *zu'ama* dominance over community members. Many Shiites split between the major ideological political parties, such as the Lebanese Communist Party, the Progressive Socialist Party and the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party. New powerbrokers arose and non-*za'im* political candidates started appearing in both the communal and national

scene. The power of the Shiite *zu'ama* was in danger and the coming of Musa al-Sadr to Lebanon from Najaf, signified less than a decade later, a revolution for the Lebanese Shiites and their traditional representation.

2. Musa al-Sadr and Khomeini: the Changing Face of Lebanese Shiites

The history of the Shiite community in the sixties and in the seventies is concretely intertwined with the narratives surrounding the figure of Musa al-Sadr. Sadr, a cleric born in Iran but with Lebanese family and strong ties with the communities of Jabal Amil, arrived in Lebanon in 1959 to take the seat of mufti of Tyre, the "capital" of the South. Musa al-Sadr was soon taken aback by the state of neglect the communities of the South, mostly Shiite, were facing. He started to work in order to both improve the condition of living in the region and, on a larger scale, the role of the Shiite community within the Lebanese state. His coming represented the definitive Shiite awakening in terms of political consciousness. According to Ajami, Sadr's success in his reform project had to be tied with other overlapping factors: the arrival of money revenue from Shiite expatriates living in West Africa, and the spreading of the automobile and of the television on a mass scale (Ajami, 1986, p. 82). With the main objective to get legitimacy first at the national level, the cleric emerged first as a public figure on the national sphere, but always kept an eye on the communal one (Ajami, 1986, p. 88). In his second phase he turned the focus on the community, attempting to bring communal claims to a national audience. Indeed, during his first decade Sadr was followed mostly by patricians and upwardly mobile professionals, however, in the second decade the Shiite masses became his main audience and formed the majority of his followers. Sadr wanted to bring religion back into the social and political realm. Before his arrival, Shiite clerics were submitted to the *zu'ama*. Sadr attempted to change these equations;

however, he did not seek an open confrontation with the *zu'ama's* power in his first decade in Lebanon. He kept his, instead, for the second decade. Before confronting the national rulers he succeeded in establishing an institutional role for the community in the national sphere. On May 17 of 1967 he established, with the help of various Shiite professionals, *Al-Majlis al-Islami al-Shi'i al-A'la*, the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, which presided until his disappearance in 1978 (Ajami, 1986, p. 98).[277] In 1970 he also achieved the establishment of the *Majlis al Janoub*, the Council of the South, a state institution in charge of the development of this region. Shiites started attaining in these decades a "piece of the cake", even though small, in the Lebanese power-sharing system.

Along with the creation of these new national platforms for the Shiite community he decided to turn the focus on the Shiite masses. In order to gain their sentiments, he took a strong stance with respect to the Palestinian *fedayyin* in the South, whose attacks aimed at Israel were provoking the retaliations of the neighbour state that, in turn, mostly affected the Shiite population. Then he attempted to bring together the communities of the South and the Bekaa. In order to do so he often went to the cities of Tyre and Baalbeck to deliver passionate speeches. In 1974, in the latter town, he reached his ultimate goal: the proclamation of the Shiite popular mass movement of *Harakat al-Mahrumin*, the Movement of the Deprived, or Amal. His charismatic, and rather ambiguous, personality helped him gain both allies and enemies both on the national and communal levels.[278] The Lebanese civil war was on its way and Sadr's move-

277 The Council is composed of an executive committee of 43 seats, of which 19 were for the Shiite members of the Parliament, 12 for religious functionaries, and 12 for laymen.
278 Ambiguity refers to the contradictions beside Sadr's action and thought. At the very beginning of the civil war the cleric staged a no-end hunger strike to protest the opening of hostilities among Lebanese, but at the same time an accident in a training camp in the Bekaa valley let discover the Lebanese that Musa al-Sadr was also establishing a Shiite armed militia.

ment soon became one of the many actors involved in the battle, after its own confessional militia was established. In the August of 1978, during a diplomatic trip to Libya he mysteriously disappeared, which made his figure even more enigmatic. He soon became the idealized hidden Imam. After the shacking community lost its demiurge and shepherd, Musa al-Sadr was replaced by Nabih Berry, a lawyer and former expatriate in Africa. Berry still has the main Shiite office, that of speaker of the Parliament.


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Only one year after the disappearance of the "Imam", another event was soon going to shape the Shiite Lebanese community: the Iranian revolution and the ascent of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Direct consequences

of the Iranian revolution were soon felt in Lebanon. Amal movement split into different factions that wanted to closely follow the dictates of the revolution. Iranian *pasdaran* moved to Lebanon and helped the creation of various factions in order to implement the dictates of the Khomeini Islamic revolution. Particularly, among these factions, emerged a group, Hezbollah the "Party of God" that officially presented its political program in 1985.[279] Hezbollah's appearance within the Lebanese scene, and especially within the community, provoked continuous fights in the last years of the civil war between Hezbollah and Amal, especially for the power over Shiite territories. The continuous clashes were interrupted at that time by a gentlemen agreement between Iran and Syria, the protectors of Hezbollah and Amal respectively. At the end of the civil war and at the beginning of Syrian hegemony in Lebanon, the Shiite groups split their role. Hezbollah kept its arms, a unique exception in the Lebanese scene after the Taef Agreement, in order to continue fighting the Israeli occupation in the South. Meanwhile, Amal took on an institutional profile, holding most of the government seats that were reserved for the Shiites, making Amal directly involved in the government. Nabih Berry soon became the perfect exemplification of the modern *zaim*, as a main powerbroker for community members in their demands from the state. Although Syria worked hard to avoid any type of competition between the two Shiite groups, even imposing a "Pax Shiite" in the electoral processes, Hezbollah started to gain confidence and surpass Amal. Hezbollah's "Lebanonization" reached its zenith with the liberation of the South in 2000 and subsequent withdrawal of the Israeli troops. The "Lebanonization" of the Islamic "resistance" was a process that could not be stopped anymore, and the events of 2005 will explain this phenomenon.

279 On the creation of Hezbollah, see: Norton, A. R. (1987). *Amal and the Shia: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*. Austin: University of Texas Press; Saad-Ghorayeb, A. (2002). *Hizb'ullah: Politics & Religion*. London-Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press.

The period between the "appearance" of Musa al-Sadr in Lebanon and the liberation of the South in 2000 definitely represented the consecration of the Shiite community in terms of political consciousness. Norton understood the first phase of such awakening as a result of two step-process: the social and economic uprooting of the community and the political mobilization (Norton, 1987, p. 19). Cobban instead took a more regional perspective in order to explain the political consciousness of the Shiites, including Israel's invasion of the South, the disappearance of Musa al-Sadr and the rise of Khomeini in Iran (Cobban, 1985). Nasr also identified the date of 6th December 1984 as the moment in which Shiites, through revolt in the capital Beirut, affirmed themselves as a necessary force that had to be included in any new arrangement of the Lebanese political system. This is contrary to the docile role Shiites played in the formation of the National Pact of 1943 (Nasr, 1985). All these factors influenced the evolution and the definitive creation of a Shiite political consciousness as a main force within the Lebanese scene.

3. From *Mitwali* to *Rafidun*. From Downtrodden to *Mustad'afin*: Shiite Self-Representation

> "We do not want to clash with the regime, with those who neglect us. Today, we shout out loud the wrongs against us, that cloud of injustice that has followed us since the beginning of our history. Starting from today we will no longer complain nor cry. Our name is not *mitwali*, our name is "men of refusal" (*rafidun*), "men of vengeance", "men who revolt against all tyranny" (*kharijun*), even though this costs us our blood and our lives. Husain faced the enemy with 70 men; the enemy was very numerous. Today we are more than 70, and our enemy is not the quarter of the whole world...We want our full rights completely" (Norton, 1987, pp. 46-47).

Musa al-Sadr words in 1974 during a massive rally in the Bekaa valley highlights two main ideas that would shape Shiite community identity and self-perception. On one hand, the injustice the community fell victim to and the community's consequent demand for the recognition of its rights, and on the other hand, the events of Kerbala in 680 CE as a symbolic reference for the community. Many authors described the Shiites as the most disadvantaged group in the country, as they were a neglected community and had a long history of marginalization (Binder, 1966, pp. 300-301; Deeb, 2006, pp. 69-75; Norton, 1987, p. 17). Musa al-Sadr aimed to inculcate in Shiite members of the community the idea that they were no longer the *mitwali*, but the deprived, and that they should have fought for their rights. The new identity and the transformation of community representation shaped the whole community.

The neglect of the community in the historical past was evident in both institutional levels and in daily life. Shiites had to step out the way of the Sunni Muslims, especially in the city, and many Shiite mosques in the thirties and in the forties were closed down (Ajami, 1986, p. 106). Until nowadays the sense of deprivation runs high within the community, also as a consequence of the perception of Shiite history as one of oppression and persecution (Deeb, 2006, p. 173). The rise of the Hizbullah movement helped too in shaping such ideas and their representation. The open letter of February 1985 that formed the basis of the Hezbollah political program directly addresses the "free downtrodden men" in Lebanon and in the world (Norton, 1987, p. 169). And central to Hezbollah's notion of political action is the division of the world, in line with Iranian revolution dogma, into "oppressors" (*mustakbirin*) and "oppressed" (*mustad'afin*) (Saad Ghorayeb, 2002, pp. 16-17). An idea that Ghorayeb put side by side with the definition of oppressed made by Frantz Fanon's as the "wretched of the earth". But Hezbollah also attempted to introduce another image of the Shiite, in order to avoid the passive connotation of

words such as "victim" and "oppressed". It is due to this reason that the Shiite movement talks of the Shiites as "weakened" (*mustad'afin*) rather than "deprived" (Harb, 2005, pp. 284-285). Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah also revealed in his most recent speech such connotation, adding emphasis to the necessity for the Shiite to "have their rights".[280]

On the other hand, the events of Kerbala in 680 CE have a specific symbolic meaning for the community. This meaning needs to be related with the idea of martyrdom and the celebration of the main Shiite religious commemoration, the Ashura.

The Imam Husayn, grandson of the Prophet and son of his daughter Fatima and his cousin Ali, was called in 680 CE by a group of Shiites in Kufa, in the actual Iraq, to lead them in a revolt against the Caliph Yazid

280 See the full Text of Sayyed Nasrallah`s Speech at Divine Victory Celebration at Baalbeck, August 6, 2007. www.moqawama.org. Accessed February 12, 2008.

of Damascus. While attempting to reach Kerbala, Husayn and his guards were intercepted and besieged in the plain of Kerbala by the Caliph's army. Here they started a battle that lasted for ten days until the death of all the men that were accompanying the Imam Husayn. Only one of them survived and all the women were taken as captives. For this reason the celebration of Ashura nowadays has a duration of ten days, with a special emphasis on the last day that commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. Shiites stroll around a square and beat themselves with their hands or with swords and knives, in order to declare themselves "culpable" of not having rushed to the aid of Imam Husayn.[281] The last day in most of the towns that celebrate Ashura, a play is performed to represent the events of Kerbala. Ashura represents a cultural paradigm for Shiism and a form of expression of public piety (Deeb, 2006, p. 130). Martyrdom is publicly celebrated by the Shiite movement. It is the case with most of the other communities in Lebanon and is a definitive Lebanese mark, but it is substantially significant for Hezbollah. The roads around the main area of *al-Dahiya* are filled with pictures of past and present martyrs in military clothes who have lost their lives fighting the Israeli enemy. The importance of martyrdom in the Shiite community has risen so high that it even forms a clear mark of distinction for this community. Martyrdom has become so specific to the Shiites that political opponents have, in recent years, stigmatized such beliefs with political campaigns[282].

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281 The celebration of Ashura in Lebanon presents different public modalities. Hezbollah banned the celebration of Ashura characterized by self-flagellation with sword and knives. For this reason such celebration takes the form of a procession in *al-Dahiya.* On the other side, in Nabatieh, the celebration is still commemorated through a self-flagellation. On the reform of the celebration of Ashura, see: Mervin, S. (2000). *Un réformisme chiite: Ulemas et lettres du Gabal 'Amil 'actuel Liban-Sud' de la fin de l'Empire ottoman a l'indépendance du Liban*. Beyrouth: CERMOC, pp. 237-270.

282 On the I Love Life campaign produced by the March 14th bloc and implicitly addressing Hizbullah practice of martyrdom, see: http://www.lebanon-ilovelife.com/ and Deeb, L. (2007). Louder than Bombs. *Middle East Report*, N°242.

4. A Global Vision: *Wilayat al-Faqih*

An analysis of the socio-religious dogma that dominates Lebanese Shiism nowadays represents an important tool for better understanding the community's mobilization and the political repercussions these thoughts have had on the Shiite community. The hegemonic, or predominant if preferred, role of Hezbollah within the Lebanese Shiite community calls for the analysis of the base of Hezbollah's religious-political thoughts: the concept of *Wilayat al-Faqih*. The *Wilayat al-Faqih*, the Governance of the Jurisprudent, is a concept strictly related in Shiism to the spread of the Iranian revolution. The Ayatollah Khomeini claimed that the religious erudition of the jurists authorizes them to inherit the political, as well as the religious, authority of the Prophet and Imams during the Greater Occultation (Saad Ghorayeb, 2002, p. 59). The spiritual and political authority resides in the same person and institution, in the hands of a cleric that represents the Hidden Imam on earth (Deeb, 2006, p. 80). The *faqih* does not retain the right to control all aspects of the believers' lives. Followers do not accord him the right to intervene in matters of personal interest. The only exception to this rule is when such intervention is perceived as benefiting the general good; for example, when the interests of the individual clash with the interests of the community (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002, p. 62). Such assumptions tend to perceive the individual/community divide under a different light. This will be tackled later in this chapter.

The arrival and spread as main force within the Lebanese Shiite spectrum of Hezbollah in the last decades provoked a change in the socio-religious precepts of the Shiites. The Hezbollah movement is strictly committed to the notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih*. Hezbollah's reference seems to be the *Wilayat al-Faqih*, which is represented through local mediators such as the religious figures and executives of the Party of God, like Naim

Qassem or the same Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah (Harb, 2005, p. 227).[283] Both *Wilayat al-Faqih* and its precepts are the basis of the political mobilization of Hezbollah and the adherence to these principles is mandatory for all members of the movement. The idea of *Wilayat al-Faqih* must not be questioned by the movement's members, as it results in the expulsion of these dubious members from the movement (Harb, 2005). Even though such concepts aren't questionable, the members of the movement have autonomy in terms of religious reference. While the majority of Hezbollah members consider the Imam Khamenei of Iran the main reference to follow, a member may prefer to follow local *marja'*, like Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, who seems to be enjoying certain autonomy from the movement (Harb, 2005, p. 236).[284] Such understanding of the concept of *Wilayat al-Faqih* has wide political repercussions in Lebanon. For this reason, its political opponents have always labelled Hezbollah, as an Iranian agent in Lebanon. It is not necessary to know to what extent Hezbollah adheres to Iranian policies, but it is undisputed that the relation between the Shiite movement and Iran is a very strong one. Hezbollah does not deny such relation, but to face its opponents, it has always affirmed its autonomy and its "Lebanese option" if conflict of interests arises between Lebanon and Iran. Even out of the Hezbollah realm, the relation with Iran remains strong for the whole of Lebanese Shiite. Iran represents the only state in the world where Shiites are in power and are not a minority. Family ties and kinship with Iran and Iraq make such relation even deeper. Pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini are everywhere in Lebanon and they are not strictly related to Hezbollah.

283 On the thought of Naim Qassem, see: Qassem, N. (2005). *Hizbullah. The Story from Within*. Saqi: London.

284 Analysts split among whom that consider Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah as strictly but unofficially affiliated to Hizbullah, and those that consider the cleric as in an autonomous position. As we will analyze later in this chapter, we share here the latter option.

It is also possible to find them in Amal strongholds and fiefdoms, even though Amal does not follow the dictates of the *Wilayat al-Faqih*.

It is important to consider such issues in order to analyze the dynamics within the community and discuss the forms of opposition to such hegemonic rules.

5. From Spring to Autumn: United We Stand

Rafik Hariri's assassination and the following events that occurred in Lebanon in the last three years put the Lebanese Shiite community on the spot and in the centre of the Lebanese national scene. Many issues related to the Shiite community have been at the centre of the debate in the Lebanese national sphere. Various factors contributed to such an increase in the importance of the Shiite community in Lebanon. On the regional-international level the main focus on Iran and its nuclear program, with the implicit struggle between the "Freedom Coalition" and the "Axis of Evil", pushed the Lebanese Shiite community in the middle of worldwide discussions. On the same vein, the surge of sectarianism in the region and the situation in Iraq has intensified fears of widespread Sunni–Shiite clashes that can spill over into Lebanon. On a more specific national level two factors, instead, have provoked the increasing focus on the Shiite community. On one hand, the Shiites, among all other Lebanese confessional groups, have been the only group that has presented a unified stance with respect to the political polarization that has shaken the country. Such unity does not exclude the presence of other Shiite factions, but it is necessary to understand that such smaller Shiite factions find themselves in a clear minority position with respect to the prominent position assumed by Hezbollah and Amal. Such unity need be understood in institutional terms, considering that all the seats reserved for Shiites in the Parliament, in the national Cabinet and in the main

community institutions, the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, are reserved for representatives more or less directly affiliated to Hezbollah and Amal. We will analyze the internal opposition in the next paragraph.

On the other side it is important to underline that the "new" Lebanese government, which was the result of Spring 2005, put the issue of Hezbollah's arms of at the top of its agenda. The Shiite position changed radically with the evolution of this internal and external situation. The community took, at the very beginning of this age, a low but visible profile, especially during the *Intifada al-Istiqlal*, when an overwhelmingly Shiite crowd gathered on the March 8th demonstration in Downtown Beirut, in order to thank Syria for the support it propounded in the previous years.[285] Such position was followed by the formation of the quadripartite alliance during the following elections, where Amal and Hezbollah ran together with the Future Movement and the Progressive Socialist Party of Walid Jumblatt. Such dealing was then followed by the historical step undertaken by Hezbollah to fully participate for the first time in the national government and to present representatives in the Cabinet. The party's electoral program in 2005 that sanctions the attempt to fully implement U.N.S.C. Resolution 1559, illustrates how the movement opened the door for a possible national discussion of its role in the country, with a special focus on the arms in the hands of the Islamic Resistance.[286] The conjuncture in the following months of the implementation of the 1559 and the creation of an international tribunal to judge Hariri's assassins, put Hezbollah, and the Shiites particularly, over a barrel. In

285 It seems necessary and important to underline that the demonstration that took place on March 8 2005 did not represent an attempt to actively stop the Syrian withdrawal from the country.

286 On the political program proposed by Hezbollah for the election of 2005, see: Alagha, J. E. (2006). The shifts in Hizbullah's ideology: religious ideology, political ideology and political program. ISIM dissertations, ISIM/ Leiden, Amsterdam University Press.

December 2005 all the Shiite representatives in the Cabinet resigned for the first time. The Shiites showed through such an action, that they were a unified community. The resignation of the Shiite ministers was also an attempt to protest the unconstitutionality of the Cabinet according to the National Constitution, now that one of the most important sects of Lebanese community had become absent. After rejoining the Cabinet en bloc, the Pact of National Understanding signed by Hezbollah with the mostly Christian Free Patriotic Movement of Michel Aoun softened the widespread idea in the country that "the Lebanese problems are represented by the Shiite and their stance". Still a large part of Lebanese population nowadays considers Hezbollah, and by substitution the Shiite community as a whole, as the main Lebanese problem, with special reference to Hezbollah's arms and its autonomous nature. The July 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel helped make such ideas even more potent, as many were against the Party of God for its solitary entrepreneurship. The war almost exclusively and directly affected the Shiite population of the South and the suburbs. The vast majority of refugees and casualties, along with those who lost their houses due to the Israeli aggression, were Shiite. Even if at a larger scale the Lebanese population, as a whole, had been affected by the war, increasing the idea that the Shiites are external actors in the Lebanese scene and that they are not working for a national common good, but for their own interests. Later in this study the relation of the common good at the national level will be discussed.

In these three years, the Shiites found they were the definite focus of the public debate, or better said, of the public focus.

B. Facing Hegemony: Internal Political and Religious Opposition

1. Hegemony and Monopoly: Hezbollah, Amal and the Internal Dissention

It is not necessary to evoke Gramsci's theories of hegemony for the sake of our case study. The Oxford English Dictionary defines hegemony as "leadership, predominance and preponderance". Under such perspective, Hezbollah and Amal represent, and are perceived by the other opposite Shiite factions, as holding a hegemonic position within the Lebanese Shiite community. Although many analysts started to consider that Amal was facing a decline in its position within the community, ending its hegemonic position after Syrian withdrawal to the detriment of Hezbollah (which has in the last years almost fully "lebanonized" itself), Amal still maintains a strong base of followers all over the country.[287] Hegemony in the case we are going to analyze has to be intended as with a predominant position. It is a reality that the Shiite "rival brothers", a unique case in the sectarian Lebanese panorama, fill all the twenty-seven seats of the Parliament reserved for their community, and fully represent the Shiite in the Cabinet. Together they hold the office of Speaker of the Parliament and they also maintain total "control" over the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, one of the main communal institutions.[288] Such panorama has to

287 The commemoration of the 29th anniversary of Musa al-Sadr disappearance on September 1st 2007 in Baalbeck, gathered tens of thousands of Amal followers.

288 The predominance of Hezbollah and Amal in the Higher Islamic Shiite Council comes from the stance of the Council in the national political fight. See: Shiite council VP appeals for 'partnership scenarios'. (2007, August 29). *The Daily Star*; Le vice-président du CSC tire la sonnette d'alarme. Kabalan appelle les parties à coopérer avec Berry. (2006, November 1). *L'Orient – Le Jour*; Kabalan reçoit Kabbani, porteur d'un message de Siniora. Le Conseil supérieur chiite appelle à la retenue et déclare l'action du gouvernement anticonstitutionnelle. (2006, November 14). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

be understood as a consequence of the alliance between the two parties after 2005. Until 2005 the position of the two Shiite groups within the country spectrum was different, and only in the last years has it radically changed. Hezbollah, due to its opposition to the Taef Agreement that ended the civil war, and the consequent political system, took an "anti-system" position that stood for change in the system of government. This was sometimes a revolutionary stance as it sought to change the system of government from outside the system (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002, p. 26). But Hezbollah had to deal with its own Lebanese environment, and from a revolutionary "total refusal" anti-system party, it changed into a "protest" anti-system party (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002, p. 26), until the last evolutions of the party that made it almost a full participant in Lebanese government and policy. The position of Amal has been, instead, always that of connection between state's institutions and the members of the community. Amal was, and still is, representing the real face of the Lebanese system, under all its aspects: economical, political, social. Amal always represented the channel used by members of the community for access to the state. Many authors underline that while Amal is performing to "steal from the state," Hezbollah is attempting to create its own state within the Lebanese state. Although it is indubitable that Hezbollah definitely presents a structured organization that distinguishes it from Amal, both parties ground most of their power on the charisma of their leaders: Nabih Berry and Hassan Nasrallah. Berry has been acting as undisputed Amal leader since 1978, when he inherited the power within the party after the disappearance of Musa al-Sadr. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah instead became Secretary General of the party after the assassination of Moussawi in 1993. With him the term of the Secretary General transformed from a two-year term to an informal life annuity. Berry well represents the idea of a modern *za'im* in Hottinger's terms (Hottinger, 1966, pp. 92-93) and the protagonist of a one-man show. This is because internal party

dissention or any kinds of opposite views aren't acceptable Challenging Berry's position as the only leader of Amal is forbidden, which leaves no room for young members to either emerge in his place or harass him for that matter.[289] It is important to notice that during the civil war it was easier for members of the party to split from the main branch and create their own group, as did the Islamic Amal and other groups. On the other hand internal dissention in Hezbollah is almost incomprehensible. The presence of different currents sharing divergent point of views within the Shiite Islamic movement is indubitable, but these internal divergences are not made public as they are considered internal issues by the same members of the party (Harb, 2005, p. 332). The visibility of dissention is controlled and the movement punishes such visibility. According to Harb, Hezbollah is a movement that does not tolerate the diversity of opinions and it punishes it with exclusion from the movement (Harb, 2005, pp. 347-353).[290] It is necessary also to take into consideration the different realms where dissention is displayed. One of these realms is within the *hala islamiyya*, the Islamic sphere. Within the Islamic sphere, a sphere whose concerns are more religious, it is possible to find an opposition to Hezbollah or a dissention to Hezbollah's main ideology. The

289 Harb mentions the case of Mohammad Beydoun as an example of the internal dynamics within the Shiite party Amal, and the preponderant role of Nabih Berry. According to Harb, Mohammad Beydoun attempted in 2002 to reform the party from within and at the same time he personally took the initiative to approach the late Rafik Hariri. After that, Beydoun was almost expulsed from the movement, remaining in a position of limbo. See: Harb, M. (2005). Action publique et système politique pluricommunautaire: les mouvements politiques chiites dans le Liban de l'après-guerre. Thèse (Ph. D.)-Université Paul Cezanne-Aix Marseille III, p. 137.

290 Harb underlines that, even more so than internal discussion and divergence, it is not tolerated that such controversies take a public visibility. Harb mentions the case of Nayef Krayyem, who had to leave the Islamic movement after publicly criticizing the political use of the celebration of Ashura by some religious figures, but implicitly addressing the same Hezbollah.

Islamic sphere of *al-Dahiya* is for example divided between Hezbollah's social organizations and those belonging to Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, an important religious figure based in the Southern suburbs of Beirut, who many Lebanese Shiites consider as a first reference (Harb, 2005, p. 236).[291] The fact that dissention is, more or less, censored and kept away from public awareness makes it difficult to analyze the probable divergences that exist within the party, Differences are, again, kept private to reinforce the idea that leadership is sacred and untouched by any kind of public position or debate.

In terms of internal dissidence and the expulsion from the movement if dissidence is made public, it is worth to note the case of sheikh Sobhi Toufeily. Toufeily, former Security General of the movement from 1989 to 1991, started directly challenging Hezbollah leadership and structure just after the participation of the movement in the elections of 1992. The final challenge was in 1998 when he led, from Hezbollah stronghold in the Bekaa valley, a "hunger revolution", a form of civil disobedience to contrast the corruption of the government but at the same time to challenge Hezbollah's position within the Lebanese system and its exercise of hegemony within the Shiite community. A few days after the deadly fight between Hezbollah members, the national army and the followers of Toufeily, he was expulsed from the movement. Toufeily's dissension touched on various issues within the movement, from political issues to religious ones. On the one hand, the main accusation levelled by Toufeily against Hezbollah concerned the party's decision to get involved in Lebanon's internal politics through participation in the legislative election of 1992. On the other hand, Toufeily strictly criticized the theory of the

291 For an account of the divergences between Hezbollah and Fadlallah's followers, see: Harb, M. (2005). Action publique et système politique pluricommunautaire: les mouvements politiques chiites dans le Liban de l'après-guerre. Thèse (Ph.D.)-Université Paul Cezanne-Aix Marseille III, pp. 397-402.

Wilayat al-Faqih that is at the base of Hezbollah's religious political movement.[292] The clear-cut divide between religion and politics does not work in this case. The fact that the "Party of God" puts religion and politics on a complementary level pushes opposing Shiite factions to face Hezbollah in the same realm. It would be difficult for them to tackle and criticize Hezbollah without taking a position that also draws on religious Shiite fundamentals.

In the next paragraphs, we will try to address this mainly for the sake of comprehension and in order to highlight the position of who is challenging Hezbollah politically and who is doing so from a more religious point of view.[293] In a sectarian system, the political voice of communities requires the support of religious figure for legitimacy, as was underlined for the national level.

2. Breaking the Fence: Clusters of Political Opposition

Various Shiite political parties along with other voices emerged in the months following Rafik Hariri's assassination to contest the usual Shiite representation made up of the Hezbollah-Amal couple. Such outrage can be understood on the one hand as a direct consequence of Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, since the Syrian presence until that time had been "protecting" the Shiite community, and on the other hand, it can be an indication of the polarization that the country has been experiencing so

292 On the actual position of Sobhi Toufeily versus Hezbollah, see: Les partisans de Sobhi Toufeyli appellent les intellectuels et les dignitaires chiites à s'élever contre « l'hégémonie du Hizbullah ». (2007, April 18). *L'Orient – Le Jour*; Al-Ali, M. (2005, May 24). Former Hizbullah chief breaks cover to denounce elections. Sheikh Tufeili also calls on resistance organization to disarm. Morshed al-Ali. *The Daily Star*.

293 For a brief review of the various Shiite forces and Hezbollah position, see: International Crisis Group (2007, October 10). *Hizbollah and the Lebanese Crisis*. Middle East Report N°69.

far, where both main Shiite political parties took the side of the 8th of March bloc, leaving the 14th of March bloc without Shiite representatives. It is important to underline again that in order to gain legitimacy on a national and international level and due to the peculiar Lebanese confessional system both national political blocks need to present to their audience the widest inclusive panorama in terms of multi-confessional representation.

The two main new Shiite political parties that were established during this historical period are the Free Shiite Movement, *al Tayyar al Shiaa al Hurr* of Mohammad Hajj Hasan, and the Lebanese Option, *Intimaa*, of Ahmad al Asaad. Two other Shiite parties, the Lebanese Choice and the Shiite Lebanese Gathering, briefly took part in the public national stage.[294] This section will also take into consideration the position of sheikh Ali Al-Amin, Mufti of Tyre, who does not belong strictly to a party, but as a religious figure deals with national and communal political issues and often challenges the hegemony of the two main Shiite political parties.[295]

As was underlined above, it is difficult to draw a clear dividing line between religious and political issues, especially in the case of the Lebanese

294 The Lebanese Choice organized a demonstration in Baalbeck in September 2007, though it never again appeared in the national sphere. See: "Thousands Attend Launching of Anti-Hizbullah, Anti-Amal Shiite Group" (2007, September 8), http://naharnet.com/. Accessed September 8, 2007; "A fresh "choice" for Lebanon's Shia. A new party tries to break the Amal-Hizbullah monopoly on Shia representation", (2007, September 16), http://nowlebanon.com/. Accessed September 16, 2007. The Shiite Lebanese Gathering also showed up scarcely in the national sphere. See: "La Rencontre chiite libanaise n'est « ni temporaire ni passagère », affirme Mohammad Hassan el-Amine," (2007, July 11). *L'Orient – Le Jour.*

295 For a brief overview of Al-Amin position concerning the Shiite community and the role of Hizbullah, see: La majorité des chiites n'est pas avec le Hizbullah lorsqu'il entrave le projet de l'État, affirme Ali el-Amine. (2006, September 14). *L'Orient – Le Jour*; Le mufti al-Amine accuse le Hizbullah de chercher à « rendre légal le blocage des institutions ». (2007, July 2). *L'Orient – Le Jour.*

Shiite. The debate has especially focused on the "libanesité" of the Shiite representation, in this way indirectly challenging the notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih*, a religious notion that holds wide political influence and points explicitly to the relation between Hezbollah and Iran.

> "There is no doubt that Hezbollah is the ambassador of Iran in Lebanon. They receive between sixty and seventy million dollars from Iran each month. It is like a state. Meanwhile the Lebanese State is spending in a year three billions dollars, Hezbollah, that is just a political party is spending around nine-hundred million dollars. We made an internal statistical study and we assume that Hezbollah has 47.000 persons on its payroll. Money means affiliation, the poor Lebanese people need money."[296]

Hajj Hassan, the founder of the Free Shiite Movement, presents an even more staunch position toward Hezbollah.

> "There are two opinions now in Lebanon for the Shiites. One is the national opinion, that is the one I represent. The other is the Syrian and Iranian option, that is helped by money to convince the poor people."[297]

The attempt to represent an "authentic" national opinion is so important for these two new Shiite parties that they were named accordingly.[298] Both parties have also taken a common stand, that is against the hegemonic role played by Hezbollah within the community and both have assumed that Amal is no longer an independent actor within the community. The challenge to Hezbollah hegemony has become the raison d'être of these

296.Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
297 Author's interview with sheikh Mohammad Haji Hasan, September 5, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
298 It is the case of the Lebanese Option and of the Lebanese Choice.

Shiite parties, shaping their identity as basically anti-Hezbollah groups.

> "It is almost seven months that I am working on this project to gather all the independent Shiite persons from the South, from Beirut, Bekaa and Byblos. It took such long time because there are a lot of people that share with us the ideas of confronting Hezbollah, but they are scared to do it publicly. And then there were other Shiites that wanted to be part of our movement but they did not want a clear discourse that was going to attack Hezbollah directly. This was not acceptable, especially for me. I knew since the beginning that without a direct confrontation with Hezbollah this movement would have not be able to become bigger. The biggest problem of the country is Hezbollah. We have to be clear on this. The biggest obstacle for the creation of a country, and of a state, is Hezbollah, because their project not aims to create a Lebanese state. This is our message for the Shiite community."[299]

The Lebanese Option was officially established and publicly launched in Beirut on July 13 2007 by Ahmad al-Asaad[300]. Al-Asaad is not a new figure within the Shiite community; he was previously the head of the *Kefaat* party, and belongs to one of the most prominent Shiite families of South Lebanon that has represented, in a perfect *zuama* style the Shiite community on a national level. Asaad's father, Kamel al-Asaad, served as the speaker of parliament four times between the sixties and the eighties. The party's official statement of purpose aims instead to fight religious

299 Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
300 Hajji Georgiou, M. (2007, July 11). Le courant politique verra le jour officiellement vendredi. Le rassemblement de l'Option libanaise, ou la volonté de ramener les chiites au cœur du projet de l'État. *L'Orient – Le Jour*; Ahmad el-Assaad lance un mouvement qui s'apparente dans ses idéaux au 14 Mars. Le Rassemblement de l'option libanaise veut briser le monopole de la représentativité chiite. (2007, July 14), *L'Orient – Le Jour*. Bathish, H. M. (2007, July 12). New political party offers Shiites a third alternative. *The Daily Star*.

rivalries and feudal allegiances in Lebanese politics. The party is composed of professional politicians, intellectuals, journalists, businessmen and former leftists.

> "A composition that enriches the movement and that reflects the reality of the Shiite community, that is based on diversity."[301]

The first point of the party's mission statement aims,

> "To break the political dominion within the Shiite community of Lebanon. Contrary to what is actually preached; we consider that it is highly detrimental to the future of this country to presume that there is no space for diversity within its largest community. Historically, the Lebanese Shias were the front-runners of openness and pluralism."[302]

The focus on diversity and openness within the community is an important pillar of the party and an arm to play against the hegemony of the other Shiite parties. Given the deep national polarization that has characterized Lebanon in the past years, Al Asaad has taken distance from the March 8 bloc and has criticized at the same time the March 14 alliance. Such a position toward polarization follows a clear logic.

> "It is important, if you want to challenge Hezbollah and make some changes in Lebanon, to know that the Shiites will never accept a movement that blindly follows the 14th of March bloc. Shiites want to have their own identity, and they want to know that they are independent and at the same level of the other Lebanese. In our movement everyone is independent, and anyone of us has a relation with the 14th of March bloc, and this is making us acquiring credibility

301 Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
302 See the full "vision" of the movement at the party's website: http://www.intimaa.org/.

within the community."[303]

While the Lebanese Option has taken a certain distance from the 14th of March bloc, the Free Shiite Movement has directly addressed the March 14th politicians to be recognized as the Shiite representative of the bloc.

> "I started the movement in the aftermath of Rafik Hariri's assassination and I was the only Shiite paying condolences to Bourj Hariri those days. At the same time I am not part of the bloc of 14th of March, because we are independent, but we are trying to become part of that bloc."[304]

The Free Shiite Movement focuses on the idea of freedom, on breaking the Shiite monopoly and on Shiite national belonging, although the platform of the party does not seem structured. As a clear-cut Shiite party, none of its members belong to other confessions, which differs from the party composition of the Lebanese Option. The party also has a very strong anti-Hezbollah position and the party head, Mohammad Hajj Hassan, blames the Lebanese state for Hezbollah's dominance.

> "Cause the Lebanese state is not functional in the field to help the people, the Shiite people follow Hezbollah. Our party has been established in order to have a free Shiite opinion. The main objective is to make the opinion of Shiite people free, because the problem is that Shiite's opinion in Lebanon is managed by Hez-

303 Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
304 Author's interview with sheikh Mohammad Haji Hasan, September 5, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon. Haji Hassan publicly appeared on the stage in the second anniversary of Rafik Hariri's assassination, on February 14, 2007 and he has been always present at the various funerals that in the last years targeted figures close to March 14th bloc. See also: Un opposant chiite rend hommage à Joumblatt et rejette le monopole du tandem Amal-Hezbollah. (2006, June 7). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

bollah and indirectly by Iran, through the idea of the *Wilayat al-Faqih.*"[305]

At the same time, Sheikh Ali al-Amin, the Shiite mufti of Tyre, once linked with Hezbollah, has started taking distance from the movement in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination and more decisively after the war between Hezbollah and Israel in summer 2006.

"The decision on war is reserved for the government and the Lebanese state, and should not be in the hands of only one confessional actor."[306]

All these figures are in agreement on the subject of the arms in the hands of Hezbollah. For them, the arms represent an inequality in the system and act as a strong deterrent within the community. Such an opinion puts Ali al-Amin close to the position of the March 14th bloc on the disarmament of Hezbollah. While he proclaims himself as an independent voice, he has been accused in the past few years by Hezbollah members of being on the Hariri bloc's payroll. It is almost impossible to verify such assumptions, that may be extended to other parties, but the constant presence of the mufti in March 14 events and his strong defence of Siniora's government, certainly underline at least a strong position with the latter. Al-Amin does not aim to create an alternative to Hezbollah, rather to raise consciousness within the community and within the Lebanese state.

The main goal of these three Shiite leaders lies in the attempt to break Shiite hegemony, especially in terms of representation[307] that is strictly related to the current electoral law in Lebanon. Both parties share the

305 Author's interview with sheikh Mohammad Haji Hasan, September 5, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
306 Author's interview with sheikh Ali al-Amin, June 30, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
307 "We want to change the vision people have of the Shiite community". Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

idea that the first step required to break Hezbollah's hegemony and the monopoly of Shiite representation is the formulation of a new electoral law.

> "The Boutros Commission draft on the electoral law is a mix of proportional and majority representation. We want a 100% proportional model. Lebanon is the only country in the world where there are large constituencies and who is gaining the 51% of the votes is receiving 100% of representation. It is just a tool in the hands of the Lebanese political class not to loose power. We want to address the international community and ask them to put pressure on the actual Lebanese political class in order to change the electoral law into a proportional system. The actual political class will never make this step alone because they are going to loose a lot of power. The proportional system will break with Hezbollah monopoly within the Shiite community and us, as Shiite opposition, we will receive a minimum of 30% of votes, that means 30% of the Shiite members of Parliament."[308]

From these actors' perspective, freedom, fair representation and the "nationality" of representation are strictly linked to Hezbollah's relationship with Iran and the notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih*. Opposition to this notion will be analyzed below.

3. Opposing the Dogma: Religious and Political Connotations

It is difficult to separate religion from politics and vice versa in Lebanon. The political opposition, like the figures analyzed above, is forced to play the confrontation out in the same realm. The objective of directly opposing Hezbollah within the Shiite community has driven the opposition into a field characterized by an overlap of political and religious ac-

308 Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

tions. Opposition voices, even while they have adopted a fundamentally political approach, are required to take a stand on what they perceive as basically religious issues. At the same time, however, opposition voices do not take a stand on all the religious issues that concern Hezbollah. The idea of *hala islamiyya*, for example, has not been explored by Hezbollah opponents. The challenge towards Hezbollah generally surrounds the notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih*, a pillar of Hezbollah philosophy.

The notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih* creates suspiciousness in political terms on the position of Hezbollah and the Shiite community with respect to Iran. On a religious level, the party recognizes Iran as an official reference, particularly in the figure of Mohammad Khamenei. The Hezbollah movement formally follows Khamenei, while individual Shiites are free to choose their own *marjia* (Deeb, 2006, p. 94). Khamenei is the high spiritual guide for Shiites who adhere to the notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih*. The Iranian religious reference forms the crux of the internal Shiite factions' opposition to Hezbollah. These Shiite factions base their opposition along three main lines: a different normative point of view on the notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih*, a Persian/Arab contrast, and the issue of the nation-state approach versus the global approach of *Wilayat al-Faqih*. Ali al-Amin maintains that before the Khomeini revolution, *Wilayat al-Faqih* was a subject of law and it was not related to the political realm.

> "The *Wilayat al-Faqih* started to acquire political level when Khomeini got the political authority, and before was never treat as a political issue. It got a political connotation because the person that made with the power was a religious *marjaa* with a religious knowledge. Before Khomeini there was a group of Shia ulema that believed in the *Wilayat al-Faqih*, but without a political connottion. The authority of the *faqih* has never been in the hands of one person."[309]

309 Author's interview with sheikh Ali Al-Amin, June 30, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon. See also: El-Amine reproche au Hezbollah d'entraîner les chiites dans un conflit autour du

Ahmad al Asaad is critical of the evolution that Shiism took after Khomeini launched the revolution.

> "Our main goal is to go back to the authentic Shiism. The Shiism is based on the idea that there should not be any monopoly of Islam. This is the most important message of the Shiism: diversity and respect of the idea of the others. Until Khomeini revolution the centre of Shiism was in Najaf, and there were different schools of thought and different visions, but there was respect for everyone. Now Khomeini regime falsified everything and Hezbollah, that is Khomeini's ambassador in Lebanon, is doing the same, and we reach a point in which who is not sharing their opinion is labelled as not a Muslim or not a Shiite. Hussein died because did not want that Yazid had the monopoly on Islam."[310]

Al Asaad is equally critical of the issue of *fatwa*, often used by clerics linked to Hezbollah.

> "The fatwa, *Taklif Charii,* is a big lie. My family is in Lebanon since eight hundred years and in my house we learn the basis of Shiism. We have twelve Imams and they are the only ones with power to emit *fatwas*. The last one is the hidden Imam, we are waiting for him to come back, and he is the only one that is allowed to emit *fatwas*. With the advent of the revolution in Iran, Khomeini decided to take for him this prerogative and to be the representative of the hidden Imam, but it is a lie, and Hezbollah is using this mentality on the people,

pouvoir. (2007, June 21). *L'Orient – Le Jour.*

310 Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon. See also: Hajji Georgiou, M. (2007, September 10). Le chef de l'Option libanaise veut garder une « bougie allumée face aux ténèbres de l'obscurantisme » du parti pro-iranien. Ahmad el-Assaad : Le Hezbollah usurpe la culture chiite en inculquant le concept hérétique de la Wilayet el-Fakih. *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

provoking that young people does not know now what is the real Shiism."[311]

The notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih* and opposition to it are strictly related to the idea of the nation-state. Hajj Hassan shares the idea of his cohorts that *Wilayat al-Faqih* does not exist in Shiite history but is rather an invention of the Iranian revolution. *Wilayat al-Faqih* upholds a global perspective that brings the Shiite community of the world together around the figure of the *faqih* that resides in Iran. According to Hajj Hassan:

"The limit of the Imam, that is represented by the *faqih* in the theory of the Iranian revolution, is anyway limited to the state where the community is residing."[312]

For this reason, Hajj Hassan appeals to such "national" Lebanese references as Sobhi Toufeily and Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah to rise up against such stances.[313]

The call for "national" Lebanese religious references points to a wider issue that concerns the confrontation between the Persian and Arab civilizations. Ahmad Matar, co-founder of the Lebanese Option, and the only other public figure of the party, seeks to counter the Persian heritage by recovering the rich history of the religious figures of Jabal Amil that contributed greatly to the Arab nationalist cause.

"Il est nécessaire de consolider l'héritage des ulémas du Jabal Amel, qui ont constitué, à travers l'histoire, une référence non seulement sur le plan chiite libanais, mais à l'échelle du monde arabo-islamique. Pour suivre aveuglément

311 Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
312 Author's interview with sheikh Mohammad Hajj Hasan, September 5, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
313 "Le Courant chiite libre : Nasrallah et son parti sont devenus « un fardeau très lourd » pour notre communauté". (2007, April 13). *L'orient - Le Jour*.

> une personne, l'islam, qui est une religion scientifique, préconise que cette personne doit être à l'abri de l'erreur et du péché. Seuls les douze imams et Dieu sont à l'abri de l'erreur. Est-ce que Khamenei peut produire un document arborant le blanc-seing du mahdi pour prouver sa wilaya absolue ? Les ulémas doivent donc assumer leurs responsabilités et protéger la jeunesse du processus systématique de lavage de cerveau, sinon ils n'ont qu'à enlever leurs turbans."[314]

The legacy of the ulama of Jabal Amil is also related to the legacy of Musa al-Sadr. Musa al-Sadr is referred to by all the Shiite factions. While the Amal party has a so-called copyright on Musa al-Sadr, since he was founder of the party, both Hezbollah as well as the cluster of Shiite opposition take Musa as the example of Shiism that has to be followed.

The Shiite opposition figures accuse Hezbollah of falsifying the Shiite doctrine, thereby attempting to debilitate the religious and as a consequence the political base of the Party of God. Accusations levelled against Hezbollah range from a falsification of the authentic Shiism to the application of religious norms anomalous to Lebanese history, and the attempt to underline historical differences between Persian and Arab civilization.

4. Shiite Opposition: Breaking the Wall of Fear

Shiite opposition figures have also publicly made known the personal threats they received to their freedom of expression and to their lives, pointing the finger to Hezbollah as the party responsible.

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314 See: Hajji Georgiou, M. (2007, July 11). Le courant politique verra le jour officiellement vendredi. Le rassemblement de l'Option libanaise, ou la volonté de ramener les chiites au cœur du projet de l'État. *Lorient - Le Jour*; « Depuis quand les Perses aiment et défendent les Arabes ? » s'interroge Ahmad el-Assaad. (2007, February 1). *L'Orient - Le Jour*.

> "They tried to kill me in my house in *al-Dahiya* a couple of time, but probably they just wanted to scare me. They enter my house during the night and we had to defend ourselves. So after that I had to move out of *al-Dahiya* to Naba, a Shiite village near Sin el Fill."[315]

Sheikh Ali al-Amin has also denounced threats he has received, stating that he "has been receiving threatening e-mails, in addition to a number of letters".[316] While Hajj Hassan has directly accused Hezbollah of being behind such threats to his life, Sheikh Ali al-Amin has remained more neutral. Ahmad al-Asaad, conversely, has denied receiving any type of personal threat until now, but has considered such a possible eventuality.

> "If Ahmad al Asaad at a certain point will become a danger for Hezbollah, a threat for their power, maybe things can change. I know this and I know it can be tough, but my duty is to confront them. The point is not the fact that I don't have a body-guard, the point is that I have a lot of people in the South especially and in Beirut that support me. They are tough people, so if something happens to Ahmad al Assad it will be a problem for Hezbollah. Hezbollah wants to show that its areas are under total control, so, if something happens to Asaad then Asaad's people will turn upon them and this will not be for them." [317]

It is difficult to judge and verify such assumptions here, and this is not the final goal of this study. Such assumptions can be used as a political tool

315 Author's interview with sheikh Mohammad Haji Hasan, September 5, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon. See also: Le Courant chiite libre s'en prend au Hezbollah, à Damas et à Téhéran. (2007, October 19). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.
316 See: Tyre's top Shiite cleric reports receiving threats, (2007, February 19), *The Daily Star*; L'uléma Husseini accuse les gardiens de la révolution iraniens d'avoir tenté de l'assassiner. (2007, October 22). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.
317 Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

against Hezbollah. The implicit accusations and the recurrent objective of the opposition figures is to "break the wall of fear and intimidation" within the community.[318]

> "There are many fears among the Shiites. First the psychological fear. They make a big brainwashing of the people and they said that if you are not with them it means that you are an American, an Israeli or a Zionist. All the critics Hezbollah is receiving they are ready to transform the person who accused them in a Zionist agent. Second, the people is afraid that if they go against Hezbollah, especially if they work in an area where they are predominant, they can't work anymore. And for the needy people, money and food are more important than political ideas and affiliation. Third, they possess a lot of arms, and this is scaring people. They say that they will never use against other Lebanese, but in 1988 they did against Amal. People can't see alternatives and they have no hope that things can change in the future. The founders of my movement are brave people and they know that they are doing an important thing for the Lebanese Shiites, for the whole Lebanon and for the humanity. With our movement we want to encourage people to express themselves, to break the wall of fear."[319]

Another issue that emerged in the previous words of Al Asaad is that of pluralism and diversity within the community itself.

> "Competition is always preferable. Communist regimes did not work because there was no competition. It is important to have new movements that express different and new ideas within the Shiite community."[320]

We will analyze the issue of diversity at the end of this chapter as it relates

318 See the Mission Statement of the Lebanese Option at www.intimaa.org.
319 Author's interview with Ahmad al Asaad, July 19, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
320 Ibid.

to the issue of expression within a particularly defined physical space.

The resolution these figures want to reach is on how individuals within the community can speak out, although these individuals may not enjoy the same economic opportunities that the outspoken leaders themselves enjoy. It is necessary to take this into consideration for further analysis. A question presents itself: do these communal individuals provide an example for other members of the community to follow in order to speak out their dissent? Are they opening up the community space in terms of free expression? It is possible to address such questions in two ways.

On the one hand, their work offers a wider spectrum of political options for the Shiites that should be understood in terms of diversity within the community. These groups or figures may deal with new followers in terms of "protection" or in terms of making them civic communal individuals. The first option would merely represent a change in the political umbrella, while the second would give the communal individuals an independent consciousness and a tool to contrast each form that could be considered oppressive.

On the other hand, it seems necessary to question these figures in depth. The fact that I regard them as figures rather than groups is an indication that they resemble more traditional one-man parties that are not well structured, in contrast to Hezbollah that is represented as a very structured movement. One-man charisma will not lead to autonomy and consciousness for communal individuals. Secondly, there is the issue of criticism and challenge in order to develop a clear political agenda. If the agenda of a political party takes part in national polarization, it will not represent a necessary tool for communal individuals to express their opinion. It is necessary to underline that the platform for the public appearance of these figures comes mainly in the form of newspaper columns with a clear stand in national polarization.[321]

321 Taking into consideration Lebanese press and media in English and French it is pos-

Finally, the strict anti-Hezbollah raison d'être of these figures weakens their party goals, limiting their goals to opposition and toying with feelings of dissention, but it falls short of achieving consciousness and discussion of communal individuals.

To conclude, these figures are attempting to offer diversity and new options for the members of the Shiite community, to open their eyes and to help improve new forms of expression within the community, that is basically dominated by Hezbollah and Amal's monopoly. At the same time, they are not working to make the communal individual reach a certain consciousness of his own role within the community sphere, or to make him concerned with the situation within the community.

C. Informal Authoritarianism and Civil Opposition: The Case of Sheikh Afif Nabulsi's Fatwa

1. Historical Framework of the Dispute

The assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on February 14th of 2005 contributed to destabilize a region already inflicted by a chronic unstable situation. The situation in Lebanon, in the months prior to the assassination, has been characterized by hints of instability due to two main factors. On one side, in October 2004, the extension of President Emile Lahoud's term for three years met with strong rejection from a part of the Lebanese political figures, dividing the country's political spectrum into two major blocs, at that time defined as the opposition and the loyalists. On the other side, the extension of the presidency was accompanied by U.N.S.C. Resolution 1559, which was

sible to say that these figures' statements appear mainly on media with a clear inclination to the 14th of March bloc, so opposing Amal and Hezbollah.

mainly calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Lebanese soil and the dismantlement of all armed groups active within the country. The U.N.S.C. Resolution was implicitly and respectively addressing the Syrian "protectorate" over Lebanon, sanctioned by the Taef Agreement of 1989, and the Hezbollah Islamic movement, the only Lebanese group that was officially allowed to maintain its arms after the cessation of the hostilities in order to resist the Israeli occupation in the South.

Hariri's assassination pushed the Future Movement into the ranks of the opposition and instigated what has been named *Intifada al-Istiqlal*, the independence uprising that sought to push Syrian troops and security apparatus out of Lebanon and called for the truth on Hariri's assassination. By the end of April, Damascus' troops withdrew from Lebanon, after almost thirty years, paving the way for what international media and the opposition to the Syrian occupation labelled the first free democratic elections in June. The opposition came out from the electoral rounds with a strong majority reinforced by an alliance made up of Hariri's Future Movement (*al-Moustaqbal*), Walid Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party, and the two main Shiite parties, Amal and Hizbullah. Fouad Siniora was appointed prime minister and, in accordance with the informal idea of consensus that rules the peculiar Lebanese political system, Siniora formed a cabinet with representatives of all the Lebanese communities, including five Shiite ministers belonging all, more or less, directly to the Amal and Hezbollah parties. For the first time since its foundation, Hezbollah was directly represented in a national cabinet by its representatives or by close figures to the party. The step taken by Hizbullah for many analysts and local politicians represents the consecration of the Party of God's active involvement in Lebanese national politics, moving the party away from its previous role as an anti-system Islamic resistance to Israel (Saad-Ghorayeb, 2002) towards its complete Lebanonization through active engagement in the domestic political life (Alagha, 2006).

Apart from building national consensus, Siniora's cabinet was forced to deal with an increasingly unstable situation. While the cabinet faced such problems, many crucial issues remained unresolved. Firstly, the implementation of U.N.S.C. resolution 1559, with a special emphasis placed on the subject of arms in the hands of Hizbullah, remained incomplete. The creation of a consensus cabinet, and the cross-cutting alliances shaped during the previous elections, served to relieve the dispute and prepared the framework for the attainment of a national agreement on Hezbollah's arms. At the same time, in the autumn of the same year, the U.N. investigation that was established in order to investigate Hariri's assassination and that was headed by the German prosecutor Detlev Mehlis released its first reports after the preliminary investigations. The first conclusions of the investigation have pointed the finger toward Damascus and its high-ranking officials as the authors of the assassination or at least as active actors in the conspiracy. Meanwhile, after its troops' withdrawal from Lebanon and continuous exposure to international pressure, Syria assumed a low profile until the same autumn. The new posture assumed by the Syrians was exemplified by Bashar al Assad's speech on November 10, in which he directly attacked Siniora's government. In such circumstances, and as a consequence of Assad's speech, the cabinet organized an extraordinary meeting in order to present a statement of condemnation. The statement released by the cabinet, however, was met with rejection from the Shiite ministers, who refrained from showing solidarity with the prime minister and walked out of the session, publicly exposing the internal conflict within the cabinet. The new internal national opposition, mainly congregating around the Shiite community and led in particular by Hezbollah, began to consider the investigation of Hariri's assassination as too politicized, and to view with suspicion the creation of an international tribunal for the case.

2. Background of the Case: Minister's Resignation, Nabulsi's Fatwa and the Lawsuit

On December 12 of 2005, Beirut MP Gebran Tueni, recently back from France where he had sought refuge from threats on his life, was a target of a roadside bomb that exploded while his car was passing through the road that connects Mkalles to Beirut, killing him and his two bodyguards. The same afternoon, in the middle of an emotional condemnation of the assassination, Fouad Siniora's cabinet met in order to ask the United Nations Security Council for the creation of an international tribunal to judge Rafik Hariri's assassination and to expand the investigation to include all the political assassinations committed since 2004. The cabinet, through a formula of majority vote, endorsed the request and the five Shiites ministers as a consequence decided to boycott Siniora's government and suspended their participation in the Cabinet.[322]

The "resignation" of the five Shiite ministers was intended to pressure the Cabinet and the majority block and it was mainly concerned with the possibility of the cabinet to take decisions on a majority basis rather than on a consensual one, which was supported by the opposition. For this reason, the resignation represented a kind of implicit veto on Siniora's government, through a common position shared by representatives of a single community.[323] Hezbollah's arms were the main issue at stake during the cabinet's discussion of the tribunal. For these reasons, Tueni's assassination marks the strong polarization within the country and represents the beginning of a direct challenge toward Hizbullah and its arms

322 The five Shiite ministers will rejoin the Cabinet only the 2nd of February of 2006.
323 The claim for the right of veto within the Cabinet will become later one of the main requests of the opposition during the national internal struggle for power. The common stance of the representatives of a single community will also attempt to recall the unconstitutionality of the government, due to absence of one of the major sects in the Cabinet.

by certain factions among the majority bloc.

Eight days after the ministers' resignation, Shiite sheikh Afif Nabulsi, head of the Jabal Amil Ulama, released a declaration that took the shape of a religious edict to various national newspapers. The fatwa released by Nabulsi was affirming that,

> "there are foreign attempts, which some local forces comply with, to put Amal and Hizbullah away and to bring new Shiite representatives [into the Cabinet]. Consequently, we forbid any Shiite political party to replace Amal and Hizbullah representatives. We stress that the entrance of any Shiite political party is illegal, because it does not represent the people. We address a precautionary fatwa to every Shiite politician, who tries to take advantage of the ministerial crisis."[324]

The fatwa released by sheikh Afif Nabulsi "protecting" the two prominent Lebanese Shiite parties reflects the unified political position that Hezbollah and Amal took in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination.

A few days later, eight Lebanese individuals filed a lawsuit against sheikh Afif Nabulsi. The eight Lebanese individuals accused Naboulsi of not being a member of the Shiite sect's religious committee and accordingly, of not holding the authority of issuing a fatwa preventing Shiite citizens from practicing their constitutional rights. In the text of the lawsuit, the plaintiffs also accuse Nabulsi of

> "identity theft, threatening and terrorizing, in an attempt to obstruct the practice of civil rights, instigating sectarian differences and portraying political disputes as disputes between religions and sects." [325]

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324 Nasrallah defends Naboulsi against 'identity theft' lawsuit. (2006, January 20). *The Daily Star*.
325 Ibid.

The lawsuit filed against the cleric, the first of its kind in the history of Lebanon,[326] achieved a national and international echo, due to the visibility it was given on the national public sphere, but it mainly affected the Shiite community sphere. The lawsuit indeed provoked the quick reaction of many Shiite figures that expressed their support for sheikh Afif Nabulsi. The parties concerned by the pre-emptive fatwa also reacted to the lawsuit through various statements released by their leaders. Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah denounced the lawsuit and considered it as an "attack against Muslim Ulemas, who freely voice their views and positions."[327] Nabih Berry, Speaker of the Parliament and head of the Amal movement, also condemned the lawsuit, considering it a direct attack against religious institutions.[328] Sheikh Afif Nabulsi contested the lawsuit and interpreted it as a political attack on his figure and one especially directed against "the resistance and the arms of the resistance, considering that such attack serves only the interests of Israel and the United States administration."[329]

The eight individuals that filed the lawsuit, feeling attacked by the statements released by various figures in support of Nabulsi, decided to publish a communiqué in order to face the accusations directed against them and in order to clarify their stance. The plaintiffs confirmed the motivations that directed their course of action, affirming that,

326 Some of the individuals interviewed for this study consider that the lawsuit represents also the first case in the whole Middle East where a religious figure has been taken in front of a civil tribunal.

327 Nasrallah defends Naboulsi against 'identity theft' lawsuit. (2006, January 20). *The Daily Star*.

328 Naboulsi defends position, urges support of resistance. (2006, January 21). *The Daily Star*;; L'affaire de la « fatwa » interdisant à tout chiite de participer au gouvernement suscite de nouvelles réactions. Berry se solidarise avec cheikh Afif Naboulsi. (2006, January 21). *L'Orient - Le Jour*.

329 Ibid.

> "no one has the right, regardless of capacity, to subjectively decide to deprive the Lebanese citizens of their constitutional and legal rights and guarantees. First of which is the right to resort to the judiciary in cases of violation of rights, regardless of the violator's capacity."[330]

Apart from the round of reciprocal accusations and statements, the lawsuit was accepted and has remained under investigation. Mohammad Mattar, one of the Lebanese individuals that signed the lawsuit, considers that

> "the fact that Nabulsi accepted the confrontation under the civil law, sending his lawyers to the judgment, it represents already a success, because it means that he is not taking into consideration the *sharia*, the religious law."[331]

At the end of 2007, the judge in charge of the investigation has not reached a verdict yet, and as the plaintiffs have confirmed, it is possible that a verdict will be reached by the beginning of 2008, even if it mostly depends on the political situation of the country.

3. The Plaintiffs: Profile and Reasons

Although the fatwa represented mainly a Shiite communal issue, given that it only addressed Shiite representation, the lawsuit was signed by eight Lebanese individuals belonging to different confessional communities. Five of the eight Lebanese individuals that filed the lawsuit against sheikh Afif Nabulsi belonged to the Shiite community, while the other three persons belonged to other Lebanese communities[332]. This study will

330 See Appendix VII
331 Author's interview with Mohammad Mattar, August 16, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
332 The Shiite individuals are Mohammad Mattar, Talal Husseini, Youssef Zein, Fami-

not take into consideration the three non-Shiite individuals that signed the lawsuit, because it is assumed here that they played a secondary role in the issue.

The two individuals who mostly promoted the lawsuit and organized the initiative belong to the Shiite community. Mohammad Mattar, a lawyer from a law firm based in the Beirut Central District, remembers the day when he read about the fatwa and decided to organize an answer.

> "I was the first one to read the fatwa, that appeared on various national newspapers. After reading it I called Talal Husseini and we decided that we should denounce Nabulsi because such statement was affecting the rights of all the Lebanese individuals, and because it represented a form of intimidation to any Shiite person. It seemed that through the fatwa he was saying that if you are not with Hezbollah or Amal you are not a Shiite, but just a puppet in the hands of someone else. It was soon clear for me that it represented a form of intimidation that was coming from a religious figure and, due to the fact that none dare to go against a sheikh, it was supposing to create fear among the members of the community."[333]

Mattar, "offended by the fatwa", decided consequently to contact Talal Husseini, an intellectual and "civil activist",[334] who comes from a notorious Shiite family and is a direct relative of the former Speaker of the

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ya Sharafeddine and Mona Fayyad. The other three persons that signed the lawsuit and belonging to other Lebanese communities are instead Ghassan Moukheiber, Fares Sassin and Nada Sehnaoui.

333 Author's interview with Mohammad Mattar, August 16, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

334 Talal Husseini has a long curriculum of activism in Lebanon, especially within the secular movement and in order to pressure on the institution for the creation of a community of civil status. In the spring of 2007 he was one of the main founders of the CCNI (Civil Center for National Initiative), an association that aims to establish a Lebanese civil state. See Appendix VIII.

Parliament Hussein Husseini, and who previously served as the Secretary General of the Amal movement. Together, Mattar and Husseini attempted to gather more people in order to present a comprehensive and strong answer to what they considered a clear violation of their constitutional rights as Lebanese citizens. Youssef Zein, a capitalist businessman based in the same Beirut Central District, was one of the first individuals to enthusiastically welcome the idea of the lawsuit and champion the cause. Mainly pushed by the idea of achieving a "secular modern society and in order to help the creation of a civil society in Lebanon"[335] through such initiative, Zein decided to publicly join such a cause. Like Talal Husseini, Youssef Zein also comes from a notorious and traditional Shiite family active in Lebanese political life and is related to an actual member of the Parliament belonging to the Amal movement. Famiya Sharafeddine, a professor at the Lebanese University and an activist in the feminist and the secular movement, felt personally attacked by the fatwa and decided to join the potential plaintiffs.

> "It seems that through the fatwa they want to say that I can't reach the level of Hezbollah or Amal. If the regime is communitarian why I cannot be a minister too?"[336]

Mona Fayyad, also a professor at the Lebanese University, was the fifth Shiite individual that signed the lawsuit. Fayyad claimed, with an implicit reference to Hezbollah, that

> "such fatwa was something that was going against the Constitution. It was something that was going against our habit, and was exposed on a public level, while normally they use to emit such religious edict only among members and

335 Author's interview with Youssef Zein, August 7, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
336 Author's interview with Famiya Sharafeddine, August 14, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

in a private form."[337]

As the father of a high-ranking member of the Shiite Islamic movement, sheikh Afif Nabulsi has been considered by the plaintiffs as politically close to the Hezbollah movement. Since they agreed that Nabulsi's fatwa represented an evident tool in Hezbollah's hands to consolidate the party's political stance, they felt that the lawsuit could be interpreted as a direct attack to the Party of God, and for this reason, they decided to avoid mingling directly within the political sphere. Due to the strong connotation of the fatwa, they decided not just to organize a petition but also to file a lawsuit against the sheikh, placing themselves in a constitutional framework rather than a political one. The plaintiffs faced difficulties in gathering individuals that were strangers to the national political struggle and they purposely excluded individuals that may have had a conflict of political interests, in order to prevent the lawsuit from looking like a political issue.[338]

It is now necessary to mention that most of the Shiite individuals have worked together, namely in the activities of the Lebanese secularist movement, and their profile is one of a middle-high class, well-educated and secular citizens. Most of these individuals associate themselves with a national identity more than with a primary Shiite identity, with the exception of Fayyad, who among the plaintiffs is the one that presents a stronger communal identification. As Mattar confirms, however,

337 Author's interview with Mona Fayyad, August 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon. Fayyad will become publicly known during the summer 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, due to the article she published on Lebanese daily An-Nahar accusing Hezbollah for the actions undertaken, and becoming to exemplify a part of the Shiite internal opposition to Hezbollah's hegemony within the community.

338 It is the case of a Lebanese individual that joined the group, but, as legal consul of a majority block leader, decided not to expose himself publicly and finally did not sign the lawsuit.

> "I consider myself first a Lebanese citizen and then a Shiite. I am personally against the confessional system, because communities are provided with too much power at the expense of the individuals."[339]

Sharafeddine also relegates her Shiite identity to a secondary position, but she is concerned with the fact that she needs to deal with her communal identity mainly as a result of the Lebanese confessional system.

> "I am a Shiite, but I am first Lebanese. But at the same time, because I am a Shiite I felt that I was attacked and this was the thing that moved me. Although, the lawsuit has not the objective of creating a Shiite block opposed to Hezbollah, but instead a national civil block against all the communities and that would work for the implementation of a civil state. What is important now is to pass over the communitarian regime and try to obtain that citizens will be directly connected to the state".[340]

Zein shares with Mattar and Sharafeddine the idea that the communal identity does not represent his primary identification and espouses the need to move away from the confessional system, despite the kind of conflict that may arise as a consequence.

> "I am not particularly interested in the Shiite community. I personally don't believe to fight the community within the community. You don't have legitimacy when you fight with a communal feeling. When you will accept to be a communal, you will be labeled as a Shiite and you will loose all your credibility. This issue instead is just a matter of modernity and I hope that it could represent an agent of changes. It is necessary to move from the actual tribal-sectarian

339 Author's interview with Mohammad Mattar, August 16, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
340 Author's interview with Famiya Sharafeddine, August 14, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

> society to a secular modern society."[341]

The main reason behind the initiative undertaken by the plaintiffs revolves around the conflict between the religious and secular perspectives and the idea that the involvement of religious figures in political life needs to be countered. The five Shiites are not strictly involved in the national power struggle, but characterize themselves as an anti-system force, while sharing a "civic" profile. "Civic" here implies the idea of a constitutional and right framework of action, and not a strict political perspective that falls into the Lebanese political divide on a national level. As a consequence of their identity and stances, the plaintiffs understand the Lebanese confessional system as one of the major factors that could lead to the creation of self-proclaimed authorities and unlawful forms within the community sphere that could affect directly the individuals.

4. Playing the Sectarian Game

Even though most of the plaintiffs relegated their communal identity to a secondary position, the fact that the fatwa was addressed to members of the Shiite community forced the plaintiffs to deal directly with the communitarian issue and to play the "sectarian game." Since the fatwa represented an issue that touched all the Lebanese, Husseini and Mattar sought to avoid turning the initiative into a simple sectarian issue and sought to gather the support of other people, and not just Shiite individuals. Mattar mentions this motivation and at the same time focuses on the crux of the problem, declaring that

> "the lawsuit was not an essential Shiite issue, and neither a religious issue, although five Shiites signed the lawsuit, but it represented instead a national

341 Author's interview with Youssef Zein, August 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

> problem. It is basically the problem of the involvement of religious figures in politics."[342]

Nevertheless, those individuals who are not strictly involved in the affairs of their community, but are better defined as "nationals" given their personal primary identity, have to necessarily deal with issues related to their community sphere. The plaintiffs' attempt to avoid playing the sectarian game, as one of their main objectives, appeared soon problematic, given the structure of the Lebanese system.

The first sign of the plaintiffs' involvement in playing the compulsory "sectarian game" can be recognized in their initial attempt to gather people from other communities. The difficulties encountered by these individuals in this attempt threw them into the field of the game.

> "The problem was that we could not find any Sunni person that wanted to sign the lawsuit, even if they were secular persons, mainly due to the sensitiveness of the issue. We received many answers from Sunni people saying that they didn't want to interfere in other communities' affairs and they feared that they were going to get involved in a Sunni/ Shiite conflict. Only later, when we had already signed the lawsuit, it was possible to gather more than fifty people from different communities that supported us."[343]

Mattar highlighted another effort in avoiding the "sectarian game", explaining that,

> "the lawsuit was filled from my office, but we appointed lawyers from other communities because we did not want to create a conflict of Shiite against

342 Author's interview with Mohammad Mattar, August 16, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
343 Author's interview with Youssef Zein, August 7, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

Shiite."[344]

Moreover, all the individuals were aware that the judge in charge of investigating the case was a Sunni, meaning that

> "The judge is probably afraid to fall in sectarian issues and to create problem among different sects. For this reason he will be very cautious and he will receive a lot of pressure. With such system, everything can be easily transformed in a sectarian issue."[345]

It is now possible to assess the plaintiffs' initiative and profile. On the one hand, the plaintiffs can all be defined as "nationals" because they do not display public attachment to their communal identity. At the same time, the plaintiffs have felt implicitly obliged to act within the community sphere, while attempting not to make of their initiative a sectarian or political issue, like a struggle for representation within the Shiite community. On the other hand, even if the lawsuit in the main part displays a civic character, Shiite individuals have been the main promoters of the initiative and the strong majority of those who subscribed to the lawsuit have also been Shiite. Such preliminary considerations can be enlarged now through a brief analysis of the peculiar Lebanese system, in order to better understand the role of the system in regulating the relation between communities and individuals, and between these latter and the state.

5. The Lebanese System: Creating Informal Communal Authorities

What is important to underline here is that in Lebanon, it is not possible to separate communal identity from political participation due

344 Author's interview with Mohammad Matar, August 16, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
345 Ibid.

to the confessional system and the representative quota given to each community. Effectively, Lebanese citizens compete for political seats based on their confessional identity. State institutions place confessional affiliation before national citizenship, necessarily relegating individuals to their respective confessional community (Salam, 1998). State institutions provide communities with political quotas and personal status laws thus placing the community as a necessary intermediary between the individual and the state and the confessional affiliation as a primary political identity for the individual. It is equally important to highlight that the system does not allow the individual to be exempted from a confessional identity as the primary national identity. In effect, Lebanese citizens cannot opt to enjoy legal civil status.

It is necessary to present two considerations here. On the one hand, the confessional system tends to implicitly reinforce the political role of the communities at the expense of the state, with the latter prevented from interfering in the internal dynamics of the communities. On the other hand, the system provides the various communities with prerogatives related to the personal status of their members, in this way creating a direct relationship between the members of the community and the communal institutions. The state is also excluded from any involvement at this level. As a consequence of these considerations, it is possible to argue that the Lebanese system, by placing the community as an intermediary between the individual and the state, sanctions the existence of a community sphere, even while it does not clearly sanction the rules of such a sphere and does not advocate any official communal authority. Within such community spheres, informal authorities that are not strictly linked to the state and that lack an institutional character may emerge to represent defined poles of reference for members of the communities. The case of the fatwa illustrates how authorities have emerged to proclaim themselves respected references for the existing communities in Lebanon.

Those who filed the lawsuit against sheikh Nabulsi deem the political and religious authorities within the communities as lacking real legitimacy.

> "Sheikh Nabulsi saw himself as a reference of the community, but this is not completely true, because he is neither the head of the main Shi'a institution, and neither a cleric that enjoys the respect of the whole community."[346]

Sheikh Afif Nabulsi indeed does not enjoy wide support among the Shiite community, and he is not a figure of reference within the community, as for example is the case of sheikh Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah. At the same time, he is neither an outstanding member of the official communal institution, the Higher Islamic Shiite Council.

The informality of such self-proclaimed communal authorities serves to reproduce forms of authoritarianism that are not held accountable either by the state, which does not possess the appropriate mechanisms to interfere in the affairs of these authorities, nor by members of the same community, nor by members of other communities, because the potential interest by these latter in other communities' affairs can be interpreted as interference. The system is implicitly sanctioning two main references as communal authorities; on the one hand, through the election of a defined number of representatives of the community on a national level, the system sanctions their role as references for the members of the community that theoretically elected them. On the other hand, the system relegates the laws of personal status to the communal institutions, turning them into a reference for the members of the community. It is necessary here to underline the fact that often such communal institutions does not have a representative character. This is due in part to the fact that many members of the community avoid taking a communal stance. The dynamics within the community sphere are defined by unofficial rules and informal

346 Author's interview with Famiya Sharafeddine, August 14, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

leadership that the system does not explicitly sanction. In many cases, the discrepancy between the functioning of the communal institutions and the unclear stance of the system with regard to their prerogatives leads to the creation or the consolidation of unofficial communal authorities that can easily display forms of authoritarianism.

The situation on a national level and on a community level is thus structured according to different criteria. On a communal level, the unclear stance of the system cannot prevent the creation of self-proclaimed authorities, while on a national level, authoritarianism is barely noticeable. The system that rules the country is based on a consensual formula and is based on the idea of power-sharing between the various communities. The main state offices, the so-called troika, that include the president of the republic, the prime minister and the speaker of the parliament, have become dependent on one another, especially after the Taef Agreement. Their power is balanced in such a way that one leader cannot take an authoritarian stance without the risk of being boycotted by at least one of the other two. On a national level, the system creates a balance of power between the main executive and legislative authorities, thus reducing forms of authoritarianism.

The question arises regarding the accountability of such authorities and the means by which they can be held accountable. In many cases, authoritarianism is barely visible and public, remaining limited to the community level or taking the form of a traditional power relation between leaders and members of the community. The case considered here presents authoritarianism in the form of a fatwa issued by a religious figure, whose power is challenged by plaintiffs with a clear reference to the Lebanese system and its constitution.

> "The point is that there is no religious contract among the Lebanese, we theoretically live in a secular state, because the Constitution did not mention any

national official state religion."[347]

The Lebanese system has effectively sanctioned the presence of religious figures as references to the community and to the state, but it has not clearly defined their prerogatives and their involvement in national political affairs. The fatwa presents a religious edict but not a binding one that directs the political life of the members of the community. In many cases, the fatwa is just a tool in the hands of religious figures in order to adjust to an unlawful situation or to regulate a wrong social practice.[348] Some authors have also noted the fact that fatwas have been used in Lebanon as a direct form of non-binding edict during elections to compel members of a community to vote for a specific electoral list (Harb, 2005, p. 275).[349] Due especially to the fact that such fatwas are issued by a religious figure, they are often taken literally by their followers and it is difficult to find someone who challenges the fatwa (Harb, 2005, p. 227). For Fayyad, the difference between Nabulsi's fatwa and other politicized edicts previously issued by Shiite clerics lies in the fact that

"it was the first time that they emitted a fatwa like this, normally they were doing similar things in private for their own followers, but they were cautious in making them public for everyone."[350]

347 Author's interview with Mohammad Mattar, August 16, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
348 One of the last fatwas publicly emitted by Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah was for example condemning any form of violence against women. See the official website of Muhammed Hussein Fadlallah: http://www.bayynat.org.lb/; Nouvelle fatwa de Fadlallah La femme peut répondre à la violence de l'homme par la violence. (2007, November 28). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.
349 Harb is briefly claiming in her study that Hezbollah is often using such religious edicts, especially the days previous to an electoral vote, but giving them a low public echo by making them circulating only in their environment.
350 Author's interview with Mona Fayyad, August 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

Sheikh Afif Nabulsi's fatwa presents a form of religious support for a political action taken by the resigned ministers, legitimizing their role in front of the whole community and thereby dismissing the potential substitution of these ministers by other Shiite representatives. The close relation between Sheikh Afif Nabulsi and Hizbullah and the fact that the cleric is not a recognized member of the official communal institution make of this case a clear example of a self-proclaimed authority that has sanctioned a sectarian behaviour on a national level and has attempted to bloc potential dynamics within a community sphere. For these reasons, the kind of authoritarianism that can emerge within the community sphere is difficult to hold accountable and moreover, only the members of the same community can face it. Holding such forms of informal communal authoritarianism accountable is difficult since the system does not provide the state with the necessary tools to contrast such forms of authoritarianism. It is not a coincidence that one of the subscribers to the lawsuit considers that members of the community "do not dare to speak out, especially because they don't feel protected by the state."[351]

6. Conclusive Remarks: On Communal Individuals and the Community Sphere

The importance of the case analyzed here is based on the relation between the national sphere, characterized by a power-sharing struggle between the various communities, the role played by the individuals, and the community sphere, as the given intermediary between the individual and the state.

The community sphere in Lebanon is a neglected sphere in terms of the visibility of its dynamics and the attention paid to it by the national public. Scarce visibility, due to the main focus on the national sphere and

351 Ibid.

the dynamics of power-sharing, has produced negative consequences and has led to the lack of accountability within the community sphere. The absence of state institutions able to meddle in community affairs also accounts for the scarce community sphere accountability. At the same time, members of other communities do not dare implicate themselves in issues that do not concern their own community, as was illustrated in the case above by the failed attempt to find a Sunni individual to sign the lawsuit.

Consequently, the only figures able to fulfil this duty are the members of the community who can play a role of control of the community sphere and are able to face potential forms of authoritarianism. As in the case analyzed, Lebanese individuals who profess a secondary communal identity have been forced to take up an internal communitarian issue drawing on a national, civic approach. In order to hold accountable a sphere where they are the only figures able to act, these individuals have, voluntarily or not, split their identity and their activism into national and sectarian ones, The lawsuit is an example of polarization in individuals' behaviour, given that they understood the need to keep an eye open to the community sphere, even if in principle they rejected the sectarian logic.

The lawsuit case introduces what can be termed as the role of "communal individuals" in contrast to the idea of "extended citizenship". Due to the compulsory communal and conflicting identity, individuals opt for playing between the spheres and not just in a single one, whether the national or the communal one. Communal individuals, those persons who are actively involved in the communitarian sphere, should keep an eye open toward the community sphere. Lebanese individuals should not become "ethnic activist" (Hanf, 1993), but communal individuals that act in the various institutionalized public spheres with a civic approach, in order to exercise a control on the various spheres and not just on the na-

tional one. It is not the objective here to propose that Lebanese individuals should go back to their own community and have a strict communal stance, but they need accept that the system due to its gaps is implicitly requiring them to keep a constant glance on the dynamics of their own community and on those of the other communities. The "unwritten" Lebanese institutions are implicitly asking Lebanese individuals to enjoy their double citizenship and to take into consideration multiple public spheres and the possibility to act within these spheres. At the same time, they are the only actors who can easily have a say within the community and who are able to confront cases of internal authoritarianism.

In the light of these considerations and the intermediary role the system has reserved for the community, the importance of the community sphere as a sphere of consciousness and activism becomes evident. A strict national activism and a simple control of the national sphere would hardly be able to face such informal authorities emerging within the community sphere. In the case presented above, the lawsuit represents an initiative launched by communal individuals in order to enjoy fully their Lebanese citizenship, and in this way it becomes an expression of extended citizenship that is practiced on both a national and communal level.

At the beginning of February 2006, as a direct consequence of the stabilization of the dispute between what was then the opposition and the majority blocs, the five Shiite ministers turned their back on Siniora's Cabinet. In November 2006, less than eight months later, in the face of the unstable situation the country was experience after the summer war between Israel and Hezbollah, the same Shiite ministers, along with one Greek Orthodox minister close to President Emile Lahoud, stepped out again of the cabinet, reproducing a similar situation.[352] As was the

352 The framework of such resignations is not clear. On one hand Fouad Siniora did not accept the resignation but at the same time he designed various interim ministers to cover the absence of the "resigned" ministers. On the other hand, the "resigned"

case analyzed in these pages, the Shiite representatives stepped out of the government and the opposition proclaimed the illegitimacy of the government based on an interpretation of the national constitution that sanctions the representation of all the major sects within the cabinet. In this case, a public fatwa issued forbidding the participation by other Shiite representatives in the government can be issued. As a consequence, Shiite political parties other than Amal and Hezbollah can take the steps to ask for the replacement of the ministers with other Shiite representatives, even if the attempt is failed.

The fatwa issued by Sheikh Afif Nabulsi represents a form of authoritarianism as it is a religious edict coming from an unofficial self-proclaimed communal authority. As was analyzed above, such authorities are rarely held accountable, due especially to the fact that the state does not have the tools to meddle in communitarian issues. Although the legal verdict has not been delivered yet, the lawsuit provoked an extension of the community public sphere and as a consequence of the whole Lebanese system. In such cases, the communal individuals were forced to play the "sectarian game" in order to defend a right that was affecting them in their communal identity with clear repercussions on their national status. In searching for members of other communities, in choosing a lawyer from another community and in the inability to find a Sunni representative, the sectarian game was launched. By coincidence, the only Sunni that took part in the dispute was the one appointed as judge of the case. This may have implications on the wider repercussions that the sentence may bear on national and sectarian feelings. The sectarian game can be interpreted as a consequence of the pervasiveness of the Lebanese system

ministers continued to act often as active ministers, especially in case of relevant international meeting or particular issues. Such situation exemplifies how the struggle is not playing within the constitutional and legal framework, either if both actors attempt to legitimate their stances through constitutional claims.

on social life.

At the same time, Shiite individuals advocated the lawsuit, which represents an attempt on a wide national level to block the interference of religious figures in political life. It also demonstrates a form of internal pressure or dissent within the community sphere where dissent is barely publicly visible. The five Shiite individuals are conscious of their class belonging and economic independence and recognize that this facilitates the possibility for them to speak out against the fatwa. As one of the plaintiffs affirmed, with a specific perspective of the ongoing dispute as between "modernity" and "backwardness",

> "what it will really accelerate the change will be when Lebanese will start to depend on their money and not on someone else. Independence of thought is coming from the income of the people and the hope for change comes from there."[353]

The class factor has been considered in Lebanon by many as a special instrument to break the chain of dependence among leaders, authorities and the Lebanese individuals. Many Lebanese individuals have underlined how economic independence is fundamental in order to take a personal stance or in order to face certain authorities, especially within the community sphere that is grounded in mostly informal dynamics.

Finally, the eight communal individuals who were involved in the lawsuit succeeded in giving visibility to such informal authoritarianism and in setting a precedent that can push other individuals to follow their example.

353 Author's interview with Youssef Zein, August 7, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

D. Public Display of Internal Criticism: Mona Fayyad's Article

1. Mona Fayyad's Article: Challenge and Freedom of Expression

On August 7 of 2006, in the mid of the war that was opposing Israel and Hezbollah, Lebanese daily An-Nahar published the article "To be a Shiite now..." by Mona Fayyad[354]. Mona Fayyad is a professor of psychology at the Lebanese University and a national social activist. Beside such national activism, Shiite confessional affiliation strongly shapes her personality, as was underlined in the previous paragraph. Fayyad is also one of those Shiite individuals who filled the lawsuit against sheikh Afif Nabulsi. The importance of such articles relies on two important consequences. On one side it has been written in wartime and it was directly addressing the Shiite community in a moment when the same community was directly affected by the Israeli war campaign and Hezbollah's management of the war. On the other side, the article's importance relies on the strong impact that had either on the national or the community sphere, with the latter case in a less tangible form.

Fayyad's article represents an implicit but strong attack on the Hezbollah's Shiite Islamic movement, about its leadership and regional alliances. The article does not directly accuse the Party of God, but, in an ironic and provocative style, through a series of self-unanswered questions. The article targets Hezbollah directly and addresses the members of the Shiite community. The article represented one of the first internal critics either within Lebanon or the Shiite community, toward the *mouqawama*, the resistance. The article was written in a period when the whole country kept aside the previous political polarization and the internal political confrontation in face of Israel's attack on national soil. Fayyad had been

354 The original Arabic title of the article is "An takun chi'a al-an". (2006, August 7), *An-Nahar*, p. 15.

one of the first voices that dare to speak out against the military operation that Hezbollah undertook. This opened way to what in the aftermath of the war, will characterize the political debate within the country. Many Lebanese political factions wanted to hold Hezbollah accountable and strongly criticized the Shiite Islamic movement attitude in causing the war.

The article touches on many of the topics that the internal Shiite opposition used in order to challenge Hezbollah's hegemony within the community. The main structure of the article and of its claims, are strictly related to the same basic issue of "going out to public". Sharing this position with the rest of those opposing Hezbollah, Fayyad's article evokes the accusations of being "foreign agents and traitors" an accusation usually directed against those that opposed Hezbollah at the time. Such issue for Fayyad, implicitly displays a mainstream discourse in Lebanese national politics related to the idea of "with us or against us". For this reason, the article addresses the Shiite community and its members at least on two levels. On the first level, Fayyad is concerned with issues related with freedom of expression within the community and while wondering how to raise awareness among the Shiite masses. Fayyad poses questions to the masses the masses, viewing themselves as Shiites or nationals, whether they have real freedom or not. Fayyad displays concern about the difficulty for the same masses to liberate themselves. On the other level, Fayyad is touches on the issue of identity directly concerning the Shiite community in Lebanon. Fayyad enquires the level of Hezbollah's "Lebanesness," implicitly criticizing its political alliance with Syria and Iran. Fayyad is concerned with the importance of foreign hands in shaping the Lebanese Shiite community. She targets her critics, especially the leadership, for blaming the state for everything while lacking of self-criticism. The importance of Fayyad's article stems from the time it was written and published.

> "I had either public either private reasons to write that article. I wrote that article due to the feeling of impotence that was overwhelming me in that moment. I also decided to write it even if the war was still going on. It was an extremely difficult choice but I thought that they had to be shocked by what I was saying. The point is that by their unilateral decision to carry that attack, they suddenly destroyed our daily life. I didn't know what to do but I was angry."[355]

Mona Fayyad returns to the fundamental issue of the leadership and its relation with the masses. Fayyad tackles the issue of the psychological approach. Hereunder, the importance of masses' and individuals' awareness seems fundamental for Fayyad.

> "People use to follow the authorities, because if you follow them you are free, you are in peace with yourself, and people like to be liked by the others."[356]

On the other side, Fayyad also turns back to the consequences that her article had on hers and what wide consequences of speaking out within the community could have for individuals.

> "A lot of people supported me, but I found also a lot of people that asked me why I had to do such thing. At the same time as I foresaw I was accused of being a traitor, but my only objective was to give hope and oxygen to people that do not share their vision of the community. Fortunately in my case I live in Sanayeh that is not an area where Hezbollah is predominant, so I don't have to face them in my daily life within the space of the community. But many people do not speak out because there is the common fear of falling out from the community"[357].

355 Author's interview with Mona Fayyad, August 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
356 Ibid.
357 Ibid.

According to Fayyad, speaking out could indeed present invisible consequences on the individuals that are difficult to be detected.

But the main visible consequence of Fayyad's article came from the replies written by other members of the community in the following days on the same columns of the Lebanese daily An-Nahar, and from the impact that had on the blogsphere.

2. Direct Replies on An-Nahar and the Impact on the Lebanese Blogsphere

Reactions to Fayyad's article took essentially two forms. The first as direct replies on daily An-Nahar by various members of the community, and second on the web-sphere, but with a wider perspective not just restricted to the Shiite community.

Three main replies to Fayyad's article appeared on An-Nahar in the following days, respectively on 10th and on 12th of August, by Naif Karim,[358] Sanaa Haj[359] and Isma'il Sharaf Al-Din.[360] While the first two articles strongly criticized Fayyad's claims, the latter was the only article that implicitly took the defence of Fayyad. All such replies were written by Lebanese Shiite individuals and involved issues related to the community identity. In terms of identity, Fayyad's article provoked a shared reaction by Karim and Haj. Both authors underlined that a Lebanese Shiite has to always prove his faith to Lebanon, to be a real Lebanese, an Arab and not a Persian.

The most vehement of these replies has been that of Naif Karim.

358 The original Arabic title of the article is "Al-chi'ii al mouftaradh an yakun?" (2006, August 10), *An-Nahar*, p. 17.
359 The original Arabic title of the article is "ma ghafala 'an..."'an yakun chi'ia al-an". (2006, August 12), *An-Nahar*, p. 19.
360 The original Arabic title of the article is "min i'tamal al-ma'suliyyeh?" (2006, August 12), *An-Nahar*, p. 19.

His reply addressed the unresolved question style of Fayyad assuming a sarcastic tone exemplified by the continuous employment of the sentence "the hypothetical Shiite". Karim accuses Fayyad mainly on the issue that dealt with the role of the Shiite community as a national resistance, displaying the historical role of the community and its background. Karim directly evokes the creation of the resistance as a consequence of Israeli occupation of the mainly Shiite region of South Lebanon, the sufferance of the population, and the poor condition of the region. The reply falls into the political polarization in Lebanon. Meanwhile Fayyad does not explicitly take sides with any of the two blocks that are nowadays contending power positions in Lebanon. Karim mentions two famous figures of the majority bloc: Samir Geagea and Walid Jumblatt. Sarcastically, he asks if the Shiites should follow their stance and as a consequence go back to third class citizens' status. According to Karim this condition had been affecting Shiites until 1982, and only the performances of the resistance permitted them to reach a first citizen status.

The other two articles and in the debate as a whole exemplified the two main perspectives on the July war, which split the majority of the Lebanese population. On one side the necessary support of Hezbollah and the resistance against Israeli bombing, and on the other side the idea that can be exemplified by the sentence "this is not our war". The replies that appeared on An-Nahar took, as a result of the emotional situation of the country, a clear political stance that did not question such an article's aim to trigger a discussion within the community on the issue of the resistance and Hezbollah's weapons. Indeed, Fayyad's article implicitly opened the space for an internal public debate on such issues.

The websphere, and especially the blogsphere, split instead between the ongoing political debate at the time and he issues raised by Fayyad's article. On the political level, as usual, the article was being used mainly

by Hezbollah's opponents, especially on an international scale.[361] On the national sphere, the article paved way for a brief debate on Fayyad as an important voice within the community. The blogsphere underlined and discussed the importance of such a voice against the "monolithic" power of Hezbollah among Shiites, but especially discussed the importance of this article in order to break a taboo and eventually allow for subsequent discussion.[362] The comments on the article from the blogsphere underlined also the scarce productivity of such an article in order to reach forms of diversity within the community, especially for the style used by Fayyad.

In the end, the importance of the article is that it managed to open a debate within the community, even if the same article and the following replies that exemplified not only a Shiite divide, but a general Lebanese one that is based on the national political polarization. The problem comes from the fact that the discussion within the public sphere almost transformed from a form of possible debate on specific issues raised by Fayyad to political scrimmage along the lines of national considerations. This in turn came to the detriment of any considerable development of the community sphere.

361 The website of the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) gave for example a lot of attention to Fayyad's article and related replies. See, http://www.memri.org/. On the international echo the article of Fayyad had, see also: Fil, R. (2006, August 14). Essay by intellectual spurs debate on Hezbollah leaders. *The Boston Globe*.

362 On the discussion of the article in the blogsphere, see for example: Mona Fayyad: An important voice to cultivate? (2006, August 25). http://lettersapart.blogspot.com/. The blog is currently offline.

E. The Shiite Physical Space: Enclave, Expression and State

1. The Shiite Community is Floating in Its Territory

The main link between the idea of public space and the communities concerns the state's presence on the Lebanese territory. and, as a consequence, its accessibility for the communal individuals and the possibility for them to freely express their opinions or dissentions.

Historically, the Shiite community's territories were reserved mainly in the South surrounding the area of Jabal Amil and in the Bekaa Valley; thus, making these regions as predominant fiefdoms of the community. In the past decades, especially in the sixties, when the fight between Palestinian's *fedayyin* and Israel started in South Lebanon, many Shiites moved to Beirut as they mainly settled in Beirut's southern suburbs known today as *al-Dahiya*[363]. Shiites maintained their roots and links with the rural areas, but, due to such emigration, the community assumed also a suburban connotation. *Al-Dahiya* represents nowadays the space par excellence of the Shiite community, yet on the other hand, it is almost neglected by most of the Beirut population and considered as a stranger to city life.[364] Such "discrimination" is not due specifically to geographical reasons as it is far from the centre of Beirut, but for its political connotation: being the renowned "headquarter" of Hezbollah. The following section will mainly focus on *al-Dahiya*, but also will take into consideration the other two "Shiite" regions: *al janoub*, the South, and the Bekaa valley.

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363 On the fight between Palestinians and Israel in South Lebanon in the sixties, and the feelings of Shiite inhabitants of that region, see: Norton, A. R. (1987). *Amal and the Shia: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*. Austin: University of Texas Press. On the process of urban and social changes in Beirut suburbs, see: Khuri, F. (1975). *From Village to Suburbs: order and change in greater Beirut*. Chicago, ILL. : University of Chicago Press.

364 It is necessary to underline that Beirut Southern suburbs is not inhabited only by Shiites, but there is a rich component of Christians Maronite too.

Al-Dahiya has been the stage at the end of the civil war for the intra-communitarian fight between Amal and Hezbollah provoking an almost clear-cut division of the territory respective to influence (Harb, 2005, pp. 144-146). For this reason, it is possible to understand *al-Dahiya* on at two levels: at one level it can be seen as mainly a Shiite area and on the other as a "Hezbollah space". The "Hezbollah space" has a strong communal characterization as shaping it according to its own image, which is usually referred to as the *hala islamiyya*, the "Islamic sphere".

> "La *hâla islamiyya* est une notion internalisée par les membres et les cadres du mouvement, qui en parlent comme une donnée. Dans nos entretiens, quand nous nous y arrêtons, nos interlocuteurs sont surpris par nos questionnements : la *hâla islamiyya* représente à la fois les membres du Hezbollah, les adhérents au parti, les chiites pratiquants, et tout individu qui s'associe à la cause de la résistance" (Harb, 2005, p. 235).

Such "Islamic sphere" generates a peculiar society within the neighborhood of *al-Dahiya*, which some authors label as "Hezbollah society" (Harb, 2005, p. 224). Hezbollah uses multiple strategies of collective mobilizations in order to shape such society of reference. First, such territory is a space for the organizations and the endowments directly belonging to the Shiite Islamic movement. Charitable organizations, clinics, micro-credit cooperatives, are only few examples of the intricate and pervasive web of organizations that serve to shape such sphere. Such organizations are vehicular in order to spread within the community specific norms of conduct, values and socio-religious practices (Deeb, 2006). These processes of dissemination of practices appropriate to the *hala islamiyya*, is understood as *iltizam*. The *iltizam* is more specifically represented by those Shiite individuals that work within such a sphere in order to implement appropriate norms and values. There are then other forms that shape the

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Islamic sphere, such as the belief in the notion of *Wilayat al-Faqih*, the socio-religious celebration of the Ashura and the presence within the area of the television of the movement, Al Manar.[365] According to Deeb, the other factor that contributes to shape such sphere is strictly related to the idea of visibility. It is mainly represented by recurrent pictures of martyrs, religious figures or historical representatives of the community, like Moussawi, Musa al-Sadr or Khomeini (Deeb, 2006).[366] Shiite individuals that support Hezbollah, or in certain cases Amal, fit into such socio-religious system as active members of the community and in shaping the surroundings, *al bia* (Deeb, 2006).

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365 On the link between the concept of *Wilayat al-Faqih* and the idea of "space" and territory, see also: Hajj Georgiou, M. & Touma, M. (2006, August 4). Le Hezbollah entre « culture de l'espace » et « culture du territoire ». *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

366 Such trend has been "exported" to other side of the city, and it is not anymore strictly related to the Shiite community, involving almost all the Lebanese communities and factions that attempt to shape or mark their territory through flags and pictures of communal leaders or community's representatives.

2. Controversial Features of Hezbollah's Space: Autonomy from the State

The construction of the socio-religious sphere of the *hala islamiyya* in relation to a specific territory, opens up some interrogatives that concern on one side the role of the state within such space and on the other, the role of communal individuals within this defined physical space where the idea of the "Islamic sphere" is predominant. We will focus on the first issue in this section and on the role of the communal individuals in the next one.

In the aftermath of the *Intifada al-Istiqlal* in 2005, the association Hayyabina, that gathers various figures with mainly a lay-secular approach and whom some of them belong to the Shiite community, focused on the territories that within the Lebanese borders still remain out of the control of the state.[367] The report, published in 2005, was then followed in 2006 and 2007 by other publications that were directed to the Shiite community and mainly dealt with the idea of the creation of a state within a state[368]. The first report, titled Km^2 VS $Km^{sovereignty}$, being more sensationalists than based on actual information, focused on different places in Lebanon where the state is not completely sovereign, as is the case of the dispersed Palestinian camps all around Lebanon that have no political rights. The report focused also on those spaces belonging to actors that are part of the Lebanese state, defining those places as "Jumblastan", "Amalstan", "Armenistan", etc. etc. The report then focused on "Hezbostan" in its three different components; the South, the Bekaa and *al-Dahiya*.[369] It is spread in Lebanon among large parts of the population.

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367 See Appendix II.

368 See for example the following reports released by Hayyabina: Toufiq, F. & Lokman, S. (2005, December). Elections in a State of War. 2005 Elections in South Lebanon; Shams ed-Din, M. H. (2007, July). The Lebanese Shia in their Supreme State.

369 See: El Rafei, R. (2005, November 30). Hayyabina slams politicians over fiefdoms. Group challenges 'fashionable' slogans of sovereignity and independence. *The Daily*

Hezbollah is attempting to install the idea of its own state within the Lebanese state. Because of its strict relation with Iran, it is often accused of serving foreign interest instead of national ones.[370]

The area considered hereunder, *al-Dahiya*, embodies the perfect accusation directed towards Hezbollah's contractors as it blames the Shiite Islamic movement as attempting to create its own state. Until the July war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006, and possibly also after such event, *al-Dahiya* and especially the district of Haret Hreik, has been renowned for being the base of the general headquarter of the Islamic movement. In this district there were the main offices of the party and the access was clearly restricted to people living in this part of the neighborhood.[371] Is-

Star.

370 Such assumption is problematic; Hezbollah has many followers within the Shiite community and also in the Lebanese national scene. Such assumption has to be read following the internal struggle that characterized Lebanon in the aftermath of Rafik Hariri's assassination.

371 Such restricted area in Beirut Southern suburbs was composed of just a block of various buildings that were closed by a gate patrulled by Hezbollah militants.

raeli's bombs badly hit this area of the Beirut Southern suburb, almost destroying the offices of the party and many other buildings around them. In the aftermath of the war, Hezbollah officers required an identification card in order to release a pass-partout to visit the destruction sites. Hezbollah "soldiers" were clearly visible during the following celebration of the Divine Victory in September 2006. The visibility of such control seems important and we will go back to this later. What is differentiating Hezbollah from other groups, parties or communities with similar practices, is the result of the anti-system stance that Hezbollah took at the end of the civil war in the nineties, and the possession of a great capacity of arms. Hezbollah was the only militia that was recognized as a resistance movement, and was accordingly allowed to keep its arms after the war, for the sake of the resistance against Israeli occupation of the South. Considering its lack of direct involvement in the political system, it remained outside the struggle dynamic with other groups on the national sphere over a piece of the Lebanese cake. Economic autonomy makes the Islamic movement substitute the absence of the state and permits the movement to avoid dependency on a share of the Lebanese cake[372]. This is the main point that differentiated Hizbullah from the other Lebanese groups and communities. The weeks following the end of the hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel, Hassan Nasrallah and the Islamic movement offered each family that lost their house an amount of around 12.000$. Such gesture pushed Fouad Siniora government to re-launch with a better offer of compensation for the displaced.[373]

372 We assume here that Hezbollah is receiving funds from Iran, that is almost accepted by everyone

373 See: Le chef du Hezbollah promet d'indemniser à partir d'aujourd'hui les propriétaires d'habitations détruites. Sayyed Nasrallah revendique une « victoire stratégique » et refuse de désarmer à la hâte. (2006, August 15). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

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The events occurred in the historical moment taken here into consideration represent an important divide that will influence the considerations on such dynamics and the evolution within the Lebanese entity. The major ridge was represented directly by the July war and the resultant implementation of U.N. Resolution 1701 that marked the end of the conflict and the deployment of the national army on all Lebanese soil, with the exception of the Palestinian camps. The end of Israeli occupation of the South in 2000 and the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005 opened the debate within the country on the disarmament of Hezbollah and the deployment of the army in Hezbollah-controlled areas. Until August 2006, State presence in the South of Lebanon and closest to Israel represented by Lebanese army checkpoints, stopped short by the Litani River. The implementation of U.N.S.C. Resolution 1701 implied the presence of a greater number of UNIFIL international troops and the presence of the Lebanese army at the border with Israel, first time for thirty years. The U.N.S.C. Resolution's main aim was that of controlling the area between the Litani River and the Israeli-Lebanese border, and of contrasting the rearmament of Hezbollah or the activities of any armed movement. For these reasons, Hezbollah was to at least to lose visibility in the South.

The war, the destruction of mainly Shiite areas, the deployment of UNIFIL troops and the Lebanese army provoked at least two consequences: one on a larger scale and another on a smaller scale, respectively in the South and in the neighbourhood of *al-Dahiya*. On one side the presence of Lebanese troops and especially of the UNIFIL, attracted attention on the national sphere to Hezbollah's or some affiliates' attempt of buying neighbouring lands – in regions inhabited by other Lebanese communities - in order to create a new space for the resistance north of the Litani River.[374] Such attempts to buy lands in the South and in the

374 See: La polémique sur l'acquisition massive de terrains à Aley se poursuit. (2007,

Bekaa valley brought the attention of the other community leaders.[375] It is evident that the attempt of buying lands in Lebanon inevitable intended as a sectarian-sensitive issue. Despite the presence of the UNIFIL and Lebanese troops, Hezbollah exhibited its strength in November 2007 when the Islamic movement assembled a non-armed military manoeuvre near the Israeli border.[376]

On a smaller scale, the main issue in *al-Dahiya* in the period following the July war has been the reconstruction of the Southern suburbs and especially the neighbourhood where Hezbollah's "security area" was located before the beginning of the war. There have been attempts to make a public concourse for the reconstruction but at the end the reconstruction process was managed directly by the brand new construction company of the Islamic movement: *Wa'ad*.[377] On the other side, Hezbollah's control over the neighbourhood is vast. In order to film or take pictures, *Al-Dahiya* still remains inaccessible without a permission released by Hezbol-

January 10). *L'Orient – Le Jour*; Blanford, N. (2007, February 26). Hizbullah builds new line of defense. Shiite militants are rearming and supporters are amassing real estate along the UN buffer. *The Christian Science Monitor*.

375 The leader of the Druze community, Walid Jumblatt, has been especially critic of such attempt by Hezbollah to buy lands north of Litani River.

376 See: Hezbollah conducts military maneuver in the South. (2007, November 5). http://nowlebanon.com/. Accessed November 5, 2007.

377 On the process of reconstruction of *al-Dahiya*, see: Fawaz, M. & Ghandour, M. (2007). *The Reconstruction of Haret Hreik: Design Options for Improving the Livability of the Neighborhood*. The Reconstruction Unit at the Department of Architecture and Design (AUB); Putting Haret Hreik Back Ghaddar, H. (2007, June 26). Together Again. International and Lebanese architecture and design experts square off with Hezbollah's plans to rebuild the Dahiyeh. http://nowlebanon.com/. Accessed June 26, 2007; Ohrstorm, L. (2007, May 25). Hizbullah's construction arm to start rebuilding Dahiyeh in June. Organization aims to preserve neighborhood's identity. *The Daily Star*; Ohrstrom, L. (2007, March 26). Power struggle keeps Dahiyeh from rebuilding. Government has little local presence - but it can keep building permits from being issued. *The Daily Star*.

lah's media office, located in the same neighborhood.[378]

> "D'une part, citons la police du parti de Dieu qui est chargée de la sécurité des dirigeants du Hezbollah , et qui patrouille régulièrement toutes les rues de la banlieue sud, à mobylette, en civil. Certains quartiers stratégiques sont aussi soumis à l'observation des caméras posées dans la rue. La police du Hezbollah arrête systématiquement toute personne suspecte pour la questionner. Il est notoire aujourd'hui que tout individu qui veut faire un travail d'enquête en banlieue sud doit se rendre dans le centre d'information du Hezbollah pour obtenir un permis pour le faire, après avoir fourni les renseignements nécessaires" (Harb, 2005, p.).

The main challenge to the state, and that also manifested Hezbollah's autonomy, was represented by the discovery of a parallel system of cable telephone lines installed by Hezbollah and that extended from the South of Lebanon to *al-Dahiya*. The government quickly removed the discovered cable lines, and Hezbollah avoided making any comment on the issue.[379] In this case, *Al-Dahiya* represents the example par excellence of communal fiefdom in detriment of the state, where the Islamic movement exerts as an informal authority.[380] Consequently, such informal authoritarian-

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378 It is true also for other areas in Beirut. In Downtown Beirut for example it is necessary a permission released from Solidere office in order to film in the area or to take picture of some specific buildings. The important point that needs to be underlined is that such permission is not released by the state, but by a private company, mainly owned by the Hariri family.

379 Blanford, N. (2007, August 30). Danger. Do not cross. Hezbollah lays down more lines, phone lines, red lines and border lines. http://nowlebanon.com/. Accessed August 30, 2007; Government to probe phone lines installed by Hizbullah (2007, August 8). *The Daily Star*.; Information Minister Ghazi Aridi announced Wednesday that Hizbullah's illegal communications network in Beirut has been removed. (2007, September 12). http://naharnet.com/. Accessed September 12, 2007.

380 Hizbullah Gunmen Briefly Kidnap Three Lebanese Policemen (2007, June 15).

ism and control within a specific area could result the exportation of such an experience to other areas in light of the sectarian competition among the various Lebanese groups or communities.

> "In the last years all the Lebanese parties are imitating the way Hezbollah is presenting itself. They are giving the bad example in terms of confessional area control. Koreitem is becoming like *al-Dahiya*, especially in terms of security, that is mainly private. It always existed this situation but in a more discrete way, not it is showed to the public. Each political faction is trying to emulate this."[381]

It is questionable if the creation of such an enclave could be a consequence of the Lebanese communitarian system, and just one of the possible extremities of the fragmentation of the state in various communitarian entities. It is not possible to relate such a form of informal "canonization" solely with Hezbollah and the Shiite community. The Lebanese Forces installed similar fiefdoms in the Kesserouan region during the civil war, as was the case with Jumblatt's rule in Chouf and the Tashnak's rule in the Armenian suburb of Burj Hammud (Harb, 2005, pp. 364-365). According to Harb, such areas represent autonomous enclaves where it is possible to find alternative forms of public action (Harb, 2005). What seems more important, considering the structure of the Lebanese system, is the role of the communal individuals within such enclaves in terms of accessibility and in terms of the possibility to freely express their opinions or dissention toward these non-state actors that exert themselves as informal authorities.

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http://naharnet.com/. Accessed June 15, 2007; Le Hezbollah capture trois « soldats israéliens » lors de simulations à… Baalbeck. (2007, July 24). *L'Orient – Le Jour*.

381 Author's interview with Lokman Slim, August 31, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

3. Internal Space: Dissention and Visibility

The various studies on the *hala islamiyya* and the Shiite territory, with special reference to *al-Dahiya*, only briefly highlights focus on the consequences that the structure of this territory has on the individuals residing there in terms of accessibility, dissention, and possible forms of expression. According to Lara Deeb, in her study on public piety in *al-Dahiya* neighborhood:

> "There are many Shiites who do not support or identify with Hizbullah, but who live in Hizbullah-dominant areas quietly, without registering their dissent, whether because of social pressures or the institutional hegemony of the party in their neighborhoods" (Deeb, 2006, p. 11 note 21).

Social pressure leads to quite an important deterrent for speaking out, and at the same time makes it difficult to plot such a feeling publicly. Such issue is definitely not public and at the same time Hezbollah's detractors on the national sphere have not yet evoked it. Lokman finds the reason for this absence of publicness in some sort of a game within the system and as a structural pillar of the system.

> "No one wants to denounce the others in order to avoid to be denounced themselves. It is a practice that concerns each single group in Lebanon, but it is obvious that Hezbollah's fiefdoms represent the extreme conditions of this situation."[382]

Hereunder, *Al-Dahiya* is considered for this same reason. In terms of visibility and from a preliminary observation, this area represents - par excellence - the space where the absence of the state is evident and where

382 Author's interview with Lokman Slim, August 31, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

a certain group constructed a society that is autonomous and self-organized, definitely turning it to a communitarian enclave. *Al-Dahiya* is the place of the society of *hala islamiyya*. Looking back at Lebanese history it is possible to argue that in wartime and in a tense situation within the country, most of the areas on the Lebanese soil could be shaped into this same way. It was almost evident from informal talks with members of the community and the interviewed figures, that dissention or denunciation is definitely absent, especially within a particular territory where a group is predominant. Many underlined the "fear" of loosing their role in that "society" and that denunciation or isolation from such rulers could bring them to exclusion or ostracism from the territory and the society. However, exclusion resulting from political dissent also has to be intended in terms of autonomy from Hezbollah on the social or business field. Mona Harb is providing with some illuminating examples on the acceptance of diversity within the *hala islamiyya*. The narrative around a Shiite couple residing and active within the *hala islamiyya* is reproduced here entirely for the sake of clarity.

> "Parmi celles-ci, un couple d'une trentaine d'années, militants indépendants pour la *hâla islamiyya*, décide en hiver 2000 d'établir une maison d'édition qui publie un magazine pour les enfants décrivant l'islam chiite, son histoire, ses légendes, et présentant également les performances de la résistance. Le journal, dont on ne donnera pas le nom ici414, est publié et distribué gratuitement durant le premier trimestre. Vu son succès, il est mis en vente à partir du quatrième numéro, et diffusé plus largement. Le couple qui a créé le magazine réside à Haret Hreik ; l'épouse, voilée, prend des cours dans une *hawza* progressiste proche de Sayyed Fadlallah; l'époux, pratiquant, est un homme d'affaires, réussi, très versé dans les affaires de l'islam chiite, et qui se distancie de la politique du Hezbollah – nous l'appellerons Hassan. Quelques jours après la parution du quatrième numéro du journal, Hassan est contacté par un représentant

> du Hezbollah qui lui fait savoir que le mouvement est très intéressé par le succès du magazine, et qu'il aimerait en faire partie, d'autant que la résistance est une cause qui a été initiée par le Hezbollah, et qui lui est très chère. Hassan ne veut pas s'associer avec le Hezbollah et estime que la cause de la résistance n'est pas le seul apanage du parti de Dieu : il refuse la proposition. Il est alors sollicité à nouveau par des proches du Hezbollah, plus haut placés que le premier émissaire, qui lui font comprendre que s'il ne coopère pas, « le magazine ne pourra plus être publié ». Le magazine est ainsi stoppé après la parution du cinquième numéro. La maison d'édition continue d'opérer aujourd'hui, mais elle publie des livres qui n'ont pas de rapport avec la résistance. Cet incident n'est pas invraisemblable, et le Hezbollah pourrait avoir recours à des pratiques de la sorte. Il est extrêmement improbable que les dirigeants du mouvement confirment cette histoire. Cependant, cet incident peut être croisé avec d'autres et conforter notre hypothèse de contrôle et d'exclusion de l'altérité." (Harb, 2005, pp. 351-352)[383]

Harb is a serious and professional Lebanese scholar who is certainly not with Hezbollah's political agenda nor close to Hezbollah's opposition in terms of national polarization.[384] After such a narrative, Harb adds that for the protection of family she avoided to refer to them with their real name. As an inhabitant of Haret Hreik, Lokman also considers such dynamics as affecting directly the individuals in order to control their mind.

> "These are all elements that are part of a threat dynamic. It is an educational attempt in order not to escape to established social norms: educate one to educate all. The point is that not everyone need to be hit, it is enough just one

383 Such story presents similarities in terms of coercion with the Druze association that was mentioned in the previous chapter.
384 I make this remark cause criticism in Lebanon often fall in political polarization and it follows political interests.

> example for all the others to understand and make them follow the unwritten rules of this space."[385]

On a similar vein, Harb is also considering the work of associations and enterprises within the space of *al-Dahiya*. The fact that Hezbollah, through "public" policies in cooperation with politically close municipalities, like Ghobeiry for example, is giving work just to satellite organizations, is implicitly excluding other actors from the possibility to get autonomous work and "force" them to be included in Hezbollah's action (Harb, 2005, p. 352). At the same time such satellite organizations have financial and administrative autonomy, but they depend politically on the Islamic movement (Harb, 2005, p. 168). Such considerations suggest the impossibility to find forms of internal criticism either within the movement or within the space, in order to open the community's public sphere.

The people interviewed here for this study, including the Shiites that promoted the lawsuit against Nabulsi, are not part of the *hala islamiyya* and they don't live in *al-Dahiya* with the exception of Lokman that has historical family roots in the neighbourhood. Al Asaad office is located in Tayoune, Ali al-Amin's house is in Koreitem, Hajj Hassan lives in Naba neighbourhood, Fayyad in Sanayeh, and the other actors have offices in Downtown Beirut. All these actors refuse to sanction themselves from a space that is considered by them as public and not exclusively belonging to a certain group. Lokman Slim has a centre developing its own activities without intrusions from Hezbollah, as was confirmed by Slim himself. His activities are not strictly political, but he believes the space of the suburb should also be for other communal actors, in name of diversity.[386] Due to his good relation with Lokman, Ahmad al Asaad for

385 Author's interview with Lokman Slim, August 31, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
386 For a brief overview of the activities of the centre headed by Lokman Slim and the

example, took the opportunity to organize in summer 2007 a public happening in *al-Dahiya*, in the courtyard of Lokman's house and association's headquarter, in order to go against Hezbollah's space appropriation. The presence, related with the concept of visibility on the territory, seems to be an important factor that needs to be addressed by Hezbollah's opposition. During the presentation of his new political party in a Beirut hotel, Ahmad al Asaad organized a live video streaming with hundreds of followers from the town of Nabatieh, another predominantly Shiite town in the South renowned for being a Hezbollah stronghold.

association Hayya Bina, see respectively: http://www.umam-dr.org/ and http://www.hayyabina.org/Home/index.php.

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Finally, with regards to territory, visibility results in an important point either for Hezbollah's hegemony, or for those opposing such hegemony. Both factions attempt to publicly display their presence in order to show community members their control of the territory. Such conclusion seems true either for Hezbollah, in an attempt to spread social norms, or for its opposition, in order to encourage the members of the community "to break the wall of fear". For the opposition, physical presence and visibility held the objective of bringing to the inhabitants' attention the presence of other options. Hereunder, visibility represents the only form to convince them of their strength and hence gain new followers.

On the same vein, the Lebanese Choice, another new Shiite party established in 2007 took the stage of the city of Baalbeck to organize a big gathering.[387] The same Free Shiite Movement in late 2007 attempted to make a call for action in Baalbeck in order to remove the pictures related to Iranian flags or religious figures in order to exchange them with photos "de la référence chiite arabe et traditionnelle", as Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah for example.[388]

387 The Lebanese Choice, a new Shia Movement. (2007, September 9). http://nowlebanon.com/. Accessed September 9, 2007.

388 Le CCL entamera demain une campagne pour débarrasser la ville des photos des dirigeants iraniens. Le Courant chiite libre accuse le Hezbollah de paver la voie à un coup d'État à Baalbeck. (2007, September 7). *L'Orient - Le Jour*.

VII. The Greek Orthodox Community

The study of the Greek Orthodox community faces a first principal inconvenient. There is a scarce number of publications, books, articles or studies on the community in a foreign language, especially in Arabic with respect to the other Lebanese communities, and particularly compared to the other five major communities of the country.[389] Such statement does not want to be a previous justification for this study, but it directly represents a clear mark of the visibility of the Orthodox community within the country and it reflects certain community feelings.[390] Most of the authors that studied the Lebanese communities and the Lebanese political system would briefly discuss the Orthodox community as being an urban collective with strong regional feelings, and as being different from the other Lebanese communities, mainly for its geographical fragmentation. The Orthodox have been represented as well for reviving the spirit of the *nahda*, and for their affiliation to the main ideological parties of the last century, though with a wide diversity in terms of political affiliation (Semaan, 1983, p. 1).

Such a brief description has been made without looking into the internal dynamics of the community. Although Pierre Rondot simply described the Orthodox in the first half of the last century as that "ils se réclament rarement" (Rondot, 1947, p. 36), the community, especially during present times, is characterized by an intense communal public activism, and different confronting internal stances that shape the basis of the community. It is here possible to suggest that such "confrontations"

389 For information on the historical trajectory of the Greek-Orthodox community in Lebanon, I am indebted to the thesis of Tarek Mitri and information collected through various interviews with members of the community.

390 In this chapter I will indiscriminately use the terms "Greek Orthodox", "Orthodox" and "Rum," to define the community.

have been confined within the "walls" of the community, without taking the stage of the national sphere. Lay people versus religious figures, hierarchical divisions against internal religious movements, and regional against nationalist perspectives, all are but few of the contrasts and discussions that took the stage of the community sphere not long ago.

The community's tenuous status in the Lebanese national sphere could be at the basis of community's weakness in the national power-sharing system. Although in demographic terms, they represent the fourth Lebanese community, the Orthodox community's power and voice within the power-sharing confessional system seems to be quite weak in comparison to other smaller communities. On the other hand, another reason could lay on the fact that the Orthodox lived, and still do, in the shadow of the Maronites who take on a hegemonic role within the Lebanese Christian communities.[391]

The first subject to be explored in the following section is the general framework of the community as it seems to be based on a balance between the religious and the compulsory need to be a sociological community according to the Lebanese system.[392] A first glance on communal institutions will also be examined. After this introductory segment on the community, this chapter will analyze the different positions within the community in relation to the religious sphere. The role of the various Orthodox political movements that took stage on the community sphere will then be considered with a special focus on the absence of real authorities within the community. Finally, the eternal struggle between "internal publicity" and "national invisibility" of the community will be explored.

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391 Maronites hold major state offices in the Lebanese political system, leaving for the other numerous Christian communities less important position.

392 Here the idea of "sociological community" implies a strict sense of institutionally belonging to a community.

A. The *Rums*: Between Religious and Sociological Community

1. "Les Orthodoxes sont dans l'empire"

When in 1453 Constantinople fell in the hands of the Ottomans, the city on the Bosporus became the patriarchy for all the *Rums* within the Empire (Mitri, 1985, p.24). The Ottomans granted the Orthodox communities settled within the territory of the Empire a special position with a few prerogatives, exemplified by the concession of the Orthodox *millet*. During that time, the Eastern Orthodox, belonging to present-day Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran, and who were professing their affiliation to the Patriarch of Antioch, moved their patriarchy to Damascus where it resides until now. The *millet* gave certain autonomy to such religious minority that was fragmented in various areas of the Empire.[393] The Orthodox communities resided mostly in urban environments, a factor that contributed to the shaping of their own identity, which will be explored later in this chapter. With the rapid decline of the Ottoman Empire at the start of the 20th century and with the advent of the idea of a nation-state within the former Ottomans territories, the Orthodox began losing their special prerogatives as autonomous *millet* and as being included within the new nation states of the region which resulted in a division of the community in various countries. Such circumstances provoked amongst the Orthodox what Mitri calls "nostalgie de l'empire", due to the changing status of the community (Mitri, 1985, p. 412). Such perception is still underlined nowadays by Archbishop Georges Khodr when, while trying to define community feelings, resolved by affirming

393 Fuad I. Khuri classified the Greek Orthodox community as a religious minority in his study on sects and minorities in the Arab world, due especially to their geographical dispersion within the borders of the Empire. See, Khuri F. I. (2006). *Imams and Emirs. State, Religion and Sects in Islam*. London: Saqi Books. (Original work published 1990).

that "les Orthodoxes sont dans l'empire".[394] Lebanese *Rums* had to deal with the establishment of the new Lebanese entity under the French Mandate and that emerged after the sectarian strife of 1860 in Mount Lebanon. It is generally accepted that the Lebanese Orthodox opposed on one side the French Mandate and on the other the creation of Greater Lebanon, preferring an entity more coherent with the Antiochian Patriarchy (Mitri, 1985, pp. 114-116). Although opposing the establishment of the Lebanese entity as a confessional state, the Orthodox, as one of the major Lebanese communities, participated directly in state politics, providing the Lebanese Republic with the first president Charles Debbas in 1926. With the better organization of the Lebanese confessional system the Orthodox were left out from the main struggle within the country's communities, on the one hand due to their still nostalgic idea of the Empire and on the other due to living in the shadow of the other main Christian community, the Maronite. At the same time the majority of the members of the community were affiliated to the main Lebanese ideological parties and Arab nationalist movements that started to rise in the region at the beginning of the last century. The Orthodox massively followed the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP), which was founded by a Lebanese Greek Orthodox, Antoun Saadeh, and the Baath party, established by the Syrian Greek Orthodox Michel Aflaq. In addition, a big component of the community joined the Communist Party.[395] Mitri explains that such

394 Author's interview with Metropolitan Georges Khodr, September 13, 2007, Brummana, Lebanon.

395 Salibi gives another perception of the Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP): "Saadeh found a ready following among his co-religionists. His idea of secular pan-Syrianism also proved attractive to many Druzes and Shiites; to Christians other than the Greek Orthodox, including some Maronites who were disaffected by both Lebanism and Arabism; and also to many Sunnite Muslims who set a high value on secularism, and who felt that they had far more in common with their fellow Syrians of whatever religion or denomination than with fellow Sunnite or Muslim Arabs elsewhere. Here again, an idea of nationalism had emerged which had sufficient credit to make it valid. In the Lebanese

affiliation to Arab nationalist movements and ideological parties is in a sense a way of opposing and rejecting the double marginality the community was facing within the country it was established under Maronite hegemony, and within the same Arab region (Mitri, 1985, pp. 94-100). On the other hand, it is possible to suggest that such affiliation displays an implicit rejection, in the Lebanese case, of the confessional system. In the Lebanese confessional system the Orthodox hold the offices of Vice Prime Minister and that of Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies, along with other ministerial seats.

The detonation of the Lebanese civil war had two main essential consequences for the Orthodox. Firstly, the Orthodox community has been one of the few Lebanese communities that did not establish an armed militia. The members of the community split into different factions each participating in the war as a member, but not as a community. Secondly, the community, through its main institution, the Synod, took a firm public position by rejecting the Lebanese civil war, which was explicitly stated in the notorious "Lettre du Synode" in August 1975. The Lettre du Synode, besides refusing the internal Lebanese strife, also underlined the community's rejection of the Lebanese confessional system. It was unusual for Orthodox institutions to take such a public stance on political issues affecting the country, but on the other hand it contributed to shape the very identity of the Lebanese *Rums* as a bridge-community. Such position permitted the Orthodox to gain legitimacy during the civil war.

> "The position of the Orthodox during the civil war was widely respected, at such extent that while the national army was splitting and it fall in the sectar-

context, however, it became ready cover for something more archaic, which was essentially Greek Orthodox particularism". See: Salibi, K. (1989). *Une maison aux nombreuses demeures*. Paris : Naufal, pp. 63-64. For an overview of Lebanese political parties, see : Suleiman, M. W. (1967). *Political Parties in Lebanon. The Challenges of a Fragmented Political Culture*. New York: Cornell University Press.

> ian game, only the Orthodox battalions of the army were seen by people as neutral and so able to enter zones that were forbidden for other battalions of the Army."[396]

The Orthodox started to consolidate their identity as a "confession a-confessionelle" (Mitri, 1985, p. 430). A confession that is not strictly attached to the idea of nation:

> "Our mentality, and the Orthodox theology, is not confined to a country, but to the people. But anyway the Orthodox are loyal to the country, they are loyal to the Church so they are loyal to the country where they live."[397]

A community in the case of Lebanon has been always provided the national institutions with which it is possible to define itself as "men of state" without publicly displaying strong confessional affiliation.

The Orthodox are constantly balancing between the idea of a religious community that is possible to define as "an atmosphere",[398] with the compulsory sociological community that the Lebanese system requires from them (Mitri, 1985, p. 126). Such duplicity provoked in the last decades a rise of numerous religious and sociological movements within the community it a very active stage for conflicting positions over the Orthodox identity. Such circumstances differentiated the Lebanese Orthodox community from most of the other Lebanese communities we will understand; thus, analyze the community's self-perception in the next paragraph.

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396 Author's interview with George Nahas, October 1, 2007, Balamand, Lebanon.

397 Author's interview with Archbishop Elias Audeh, September 12, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

398 Author's interview with George Nahas, October 1, 2007, Balamand, Lebanon.

2. An Urban, Civil, Antiochian Self-Perception

One of the main pillars of the community's self-perception is the proclaimed difference between the Orthodox and the other Lebanese communities. Ghassan Moukheiber, Orthodox MP for the Metn region and indirectly affiliate to the Free Patriotic Movement,[399] explains such difference in these terms:

> "There are three reasons that explain why the Orthodox community is not similar to the other ones and why it does not have a very strong voice. First because it is a community that belongs from the coastal cities of Lebanon, second because the community has more a regional perspective and it is historically evident from the amount of people that were promoting Arab nationalism. Third, the community has a decentralized ecclesiastic representation, that is basically composed by the two main Orthodox bishops, one in Mount Lebanon (Khodr) and one in Beirut (Audeh)."[400]

While the majority of the members of the community seem to share Moukheiber's first two reasons, we will discuss the third reason further in the next paragraph as it involves deeper considerations. The regional perspective, influenced by religious and historical factors, opens the space for other factors that influence the community's self-perception. The dogmatic attachment to the figure of Christ pushes the community to have a wide regional outlook that includes the Palestinian lands. Ghassan Tueni, historical Lebanese figure, Member of Parliament and publisher of the Lebanese daily An-Nahar, underlines how Palestine, and Jerusalem in particular, are key-concepts for the Orthodox:

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399 Ghassan Moukheiber became Member of Parliament in 2002 to fill the parliamentary seat left empty after the death of his uncle Albert Moukheiber.
400 Author's interview with Ghassan Moukheiber, June 7, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

> "I very often say that theologically at the beginning was the world, but existentially at the beginning for us was Jerusalem, because Jerusalem is not the stones, Jerusalem is the Orthodox Christian Church in Jerusalem, the survive of which is the most important thing. It represents the existential relation between the believers and God, Jesus Christ, and it is at the very heart of Orthodox Christianity."[401]

George Nahas gives a wide compendium of the Orthodox mentality and self-representation by adding other important considerations:

> "The Orthodox community is in total continuity with the existence of Christians in this area. Before all the different schism in the Church, the Orthodox community was here. All these changes came within the main body, and the Orthodox Church is the remaining entity of the first Church in the country. We don't come from anywhere else, we are the autochthons inhabitants of this region. We are the Christians of this land. Because of this historical background, the Orthodox are spread all over Lebanon, and there is no specific region for Orthodox concentration. We were mainly established in the big cities, but we had big concentration also in the mountains. Physically also we are a bridge. Because of our presence in the cities we have some good relations with the Sunnis, and we did not go in the mid of the tension of Mount Lebanon of 1860. Another point is that the Orthodox in Lebanon see themselves as a part of the Holy See of Antioch. They do not see Lebanon as a political entity specific to them, as for example the Maronite. This gives us an openness that helps us to build bridges among communities. We are proud of our national affiliation. In terms of mentality we see also ourselves as citizens of different countries. This is why we don't have this closed mentality."[402]

401 Author's interview with Ghassan Tueni, September 7, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
402 Author's interview with George Nahas, October 1, 2007, Balamand, Lebanon.

Nahas' words introduce specifically the idea of regional autochthony; the role of bridging gaps between the Orthodox and the different Lebanese religious communities and their civil-citizen mentality. The absence of a strict nation state ideology, as it characterized the other Orthodox communities around the world, as for example in Russia and Greece, helps understand the peculiarity of the Lebanese Orthodox community, and the importance of the regional attachment to the Antiochian Church. On the other hand, such absence seems apparently in contradiction with the civic role of Orthodox, their urban habitat and especially their own perception as real citizens of a state. The perception of autochthons' real Christians and the continuous historical cohabitation with Muslim communities, goes hand in hand with the perception of the community as a bridge between different religions and cultures (Picard, 2002, p. 34).[403]

It is important to highlight that the community's self-perception is not to be considered as a static accomplishment, but it instead represents the continuous internal struggle among the Lebanese *Rums* either belonging to a religious community or to a sociological community. The actual self-perception seems result from the confrontation between these two perspectives within the community that especially took place in the fifties and the sixties of the last century. The victory of what is possible to call "the religious community" puts the members that pushed for a more active role of the Lebanese Orthodox as a sociological community into a minority position within the Lebanese confessional system.

It is necessary to realize that what became one of the most important pillars of the Lebanese Orthodoxy was the Letter from the Synod in August 1975 which addressed to the Lebanese and members of the community at the start of the civil war.[404] More than just a normal state-

403 Many prominent Orthodox figures deal with issues concerning inter-religious dialogue. Tarek Mitri is a clear example of such "communal" attitude.
404 The Synod Letter of August 24, 1975 underlined four main points that served to

ment, the public position expressed by the Synod against the war and the internal Lebanese fight represented a new trend within the community that expressed publicly its position. It also represented the resolution of the confrontation between the different internal perceptions of the community, as it implicitly supports the predominant religious community option through the development of a more clear anti-confessional position; an aspect that will definitely be assumed by the members of the community as one of the main pillars of their self-representation.

3. Community's Institutions and Structure

The Orthodox's dissimilarity from the main Lebanese confessional communities comes also from its different religious structures. While Maronite, Sunni, Shiite and Druze have their own national institutions and religious references, the Orthodox presents the peculiarity that the higher reference is residing in Damascus, siege of the Antiochian Patriarchy. The Holy Synod, that gathers the bishops participating at the government of the Church, has at its head the Patriarch; an office actually held by Ignatius IV. The Lebanese territory is divided into six parishes, the most representatives of which are the Dioceses of Beirut headed by Metropolitan Elias Audeh, and the Dioceses of Mount Lebanon and Byblos, headed by Metropolitan Georges Khodr.[405] As was mentioned above

define the position of the community in the Lebanese arena: the refusal of participating in the war and to create a foyer Orthodox; the abolition of confessionalism, with the implementation of a system where all the citizens are equal in front of the law; the adoption of political laicism; the attachment to the Arab identity. Author's interview with George Massouh, August 2, 2007, Aley, Lebanon.

405 The Holy Synod of Damascus is composed of fifteen parishes, six of which are in Lebanon. Beside the dioceses of Beirut and that of Mount Lebanon, there are the dioceses of Tripoli and Koura, the dioceses of Zahle and Baalbeck, the dioceses of Akkar, and the dioceses of Tyre, Sidon and Marjayoun.

by Ghassan Moukheiber, this divide represents the most important form of decentralization of the Church under these two lines.

Each archdiocese has a strong autonomy and independence from the patriarchate, and all the administration of their internal affairs and proprieties, the *waqf*, resides in their hands. Such autonomy and independence of the archdioceses has to be necessarily related to the role of the Holy Synod, but especially to the Community Councils, or *Majlis Milli*. The *Majlis Milli* were established in the mid of the nineteenth century with Patriarch Gregorios IV Haddad. They undertook a radical change in the way that permitted more than only a spiritual role, but they also became politically representative of the community (Mitri, 1985, pp. 88-89). The following decades also assisted to important changes in the community councils. In 1955 the Patriarchy first decided to define the powers between the religious figures and the lay people within the councils who were at that time divided between the General Community Council and the more local community councils within each dioceses (Mitri, 1985, pp. 129-131). But the most important change, with considerable repercussions within the community institutions, arrived in 1973 when, through the Fundamental Law, the General Community Council was dissolved and various dioceses were created councils and parish councils (Mitri, 1985, pp. 129-131). The bishops had in this way almost absolute power on the affairs of the community institutions within their own dioceses (Mitri, 1985, p. 131). The community councils' main objective was to take care of and develop the *waqf*, the proprieties belonging to the Church which were used for pious ends (Slim, 2001, pp. 48-49). The absence of a general and centralized functioning council results in the management of community affairs by the same archdioceses that have in this case almost completely autonomy.[406]

406 It is necessary to underline the difference on Lebanese soil between the land of the Patriarch and the land from the various Lebanese archdioceses.

> "Compared to other communities the Orthodox has not a real structure. Now in the last twenty years it changed a bit. There are more institutions, but not with the idea to build a strong sense of community. In the last fifty years there was a religious revival within the community, but they were not interested in politics or in public life, in political terms."[407]

Suad Slim describes the regrettable state of dilapidation and neglect that is corroding the Orthodox *waqf* nowadays (Slim, 2001, pp. 241-261).[408] The community today is basically without a functioning and effective community council, relying on the Church for all its affairs. George Nahas, vice-president of the Balamand University, an institution established on *waqf* land, confirms such idea:

> "We don't have a *majlis*, a body. We consider that the Holy Synod is the only body that represents the Church, that from time to time has the task to declare something in the name of the Church."[409]

As we have briefly mentioned before, the community's institutions historically represented the main field of confrontation between the laymen and the religious people within the community; something that will be better analyzed later in this chapter. Dimitri Bitar, former secretary of the Orthodox League and political activist within the Lebanese national

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407 Author's interview with Tarek Mitri, August 27, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

408 One of the reasons for this condition could be the absence of a centralized institution that could manage the development and the classification of all the *waqf*, in order to undertake planned development. It is not the scope here to analyze such issues, but the establishment of the new functioning Druze *majlis*, as analyzed in chapter 5, could represent an interesting term of comparison.

409 Author's interview with George Nahas, October 1, 2007, Balamand, Lebanon. Balamand University has been established in 1988 on land belonging to the Patriarch. Orthodox are particularly proud in underlining that while the other Lebanese communities were fighting, they established an educational institute.

sphere, argues the creation of such *majlis*:

> "In 1953 there was a big meeting in Damascus. They created the Council with a Statute that couldn't be changed without the agreement of the two sides, the lays and the ecclesiastics. There were elections every four years to elect the council of each archbishopric, through consensus and vote. They had to be all in agreement on everything, but in 1973 the Council was dissolved by the Patriarch and the ecclesiastics."[410]

Bitar is introducing the role of lay people within the council and the wide community, and the management of community affairs. The community council has always been a place for confrontation between lay and religious people within the community. From the beginning of the last century many movements with a lay or religious approach took the stage of the confrontations. Most of the lay movements were organizing campaigns in order to raise awareness within the community asking for reform that included more power for lay people (Mitri, 1985, pp. 141-148).

> "It is characteristic of Eastern Church to have lay and religious people working together, and many parishes have lay people around them, and in each parish-council there is a strong participation of lay people."[411]

Dimitri Bitar, as a layman Orthodox figure, expresses instead a critical position toward the actual condition of lay people within the community:

> "There were lay people in the Council and they dissolved the Council in 1973 and when they reformed it they put lay people that ecclesiastic choose. There is no Council now. Bishops are autonomous and there is a lot of competition

410 Author's interview with Dimitri Bitar, August 15, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
411 Author's interview with Tarek Mitri, August 27, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

> between them. Each bishop has a Council and then there is a general Council. When the general Council was established it was composed of 50% of lay people and 50% of ecclesiastic. The lay people have now no direct responsibility in the community. In 1973 the tension was high in Lebanon and then the war started, so people didn't want to talk of that."[412]

Behind the confrontation of the community's institutions between the secular and the religious people there exists a deeper confrontation in the political representation of the community, and the eternal struggle between the idea of being a religious community versus a sociological community. We emphasized in the previous pages that the idea of a religious community won over that of the sociological community. One of the main consequences of this victory was the necessary implication of the members of the community "à la communauté de foi," to have a say within the community affairs (Mitri, 1985, p. 210). Such a stance, considering also the peculiarity of the Lebanese confessional system that implicitly creates sociological community, could represent a clear form of exclusion for communal individuals' participation within the community's public sphere.

4. The "Ages of Sectarianism": Orthodox Under an Invisible Attack

It is a difficult task to provide the readers with an idea about the condition of the Orthodox community during the time this research takes it into consideration. The visibility of the community on the national sphere has been definitely scarce mainly due to the absence of the idea of a sociological community. The same activities of some Orthodox figures on the national sphere are hardly related to their own community. A clear example of this is apparent through the wave of assassinations that hit

412 Author's interview with Dimitri Bitar, August 15, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

Orthodox figures in the aftermath of Rafik Hariri's assassination, even the figures that were not strictly related to the community. The first three victims of such wave all belonged to the community here analyzed. First, Samir Kassir, a journalist of An-Nahar and member of the Democratic Left, then George Hawi, historical leader of the Lebanese Communist Party, as they were both members of ideological parties, which is a peculiar characteristic of Orthodox individuals. The next assassination was of Gebran Tueni, journalist, Member of Parliament and one of the main leaders of the *Intifada al- Istiqlal*. Gebran Tueni, assassinated in December 2005, exemplified the new trend within the community that attempted to unify Lebanese Christians opposing the Syrian occupation, and bypass the strict and historical Lebanese Maronitism.[413] Another Greek Orthodox, Elias Murr, was also victim of a failed attempted assassination in 2005.

As different as could have been the reaction of other Lebanese communities three of their members been assassinated over the span of a few months, the Orthodox did not react as a community under attack, displaying again the scarce sense of belonging to a political community. The Orthodox's main display of communitarism, if it is possible to suggest, was demonstrated at the memorial of the victims in Downtown Beirut's Orthodox Church. Contrarily, one of the few Orthodox in Siniora's Cabinet, Yacoub Sarraf, Minister of the Environment, resigned from the Cabinet with the other Shiite ministers in November 2006. As opposed to the Shiite, the Orthodox were not blamed by the majority for such move; in turn, must be interpreted as a consequence of the close relationship between Sarraf and President Emile Lahoud.

All events that involved Orthodox figures during the ages of sectarianism did not really have any consequence on the community they

413 Gebran Tueni was one of the founders of the Christian political bloc of the Qornet Shewane.

belonged to. It was only apparent at the beginning of the debate regarding the new President of the Republic that the community seemed to take a clearer stance. Both Ghassan Tueni and Archbishop of Beirut Elias Audeh personified such a stance, probably motivated by the same confessional system that implicitly demands the participation of all the major Lebanese communities in main national decisions. In the first phase of the presidential discussion, the two figures met and discussed more than once as the Archbishop Audeh received foreign ambassadors and representatives during the whole presidential bargaining.[414] At the other end of the pole, it is possible to suggest that Michel Murr, the Orthodox *za'im* of the Metn allied with Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement, acted in a very similar way, as he met throughout the entire bargaining process with different personalities, national and foreigners.

It is difficult here to suggest some considerations on the public visibility of these members of the community in the presidential electoral process, but the easiest suggestion is given by the compulsory requirement of these practices by the same confessional system. To adventure in an obscure field instead, it is possible to suggest that also the Orthodox, even if rejecting the confessional system, have been trapped in the political polarization that characterized Lebanon in the last years.

The relation between the requirements of the confessional system and the political representation of the community will be analyzed in depth in paragraph C.

414 Le député de Beyrouth chez Audeh, avec Zein et Azar, délégués par Berry. Tuéni : Il y a de bonnes prémices, mais des ébauches de difficultés aussi…(2007, October 2). *L'Orient – Le Jour*; Tueni Speaks of "Reservations" By Aoudeh. (2007, October 1). http://naharnet.com/. Accessed October 1, 2007.

B. Movements, Hierarchy and Authorities within the Religious Public Sphere

1. For a New Religious Community: the Orthodox Youth Movement (MJO)

The Orthodox community assisted in the past decades to improve forms of activism within its internal religious public sphere. The main example of such activism comes from the Orthodox Youth Movement, the MJO, which pushed for reforming and modernizing of the Orthodox Church. Mainly young members of the community established the MJO in March of 1942. At first it was based in Beirut, but soon spread its reach to cover the whole Lebanese territory. According to Mitri, the glue of such movement was the rediscovery of the tradition:

> "un attachement sentimental à l'Orthodoxie par le truchement de la liturgie, un refus des compromissions de toutes sortes dans lesquelles se prélassaient les autorités ecclésiastiques, un même désir de découvrir la Tradition Orthodoxe dans sa plénitude et une formation religieuse solide obtenue dans les écoles catholiques mais marquée par des pressions de type prosélyte et donc peu respectueuse de leur identité orthodoxe" (Mitri, 1985, p. 146).

The MJO was basically, and still is, a movement of ecclesiastic renewal and against the spiritual decadence of the community. According to Metropolitan Georges Khodr, first Secretary General of the movement,

> "The motivation was the motivation of any movement, that is to be against something or someone. The most interesting thing was that we hoped to renew the Church, to enlighten people. There was not so much organization within the Church at that time, it was ill learned. We felt that the revival would mean

> to know really the Bible and the New Testament, so we were reading and translating Russian theologians of the XIX and XX century."[415]

The need for reforming the community is also among the main ideas that mobilized the movement as Raymond Rizk, another former Secretary General of the movement, affirms:

> "The Orthodox Church at the time I joined the movement lacked of educated priests, and I had basically a big admiration for professors at universities. The reform was the basic idea of the movement. The motto of the movement was: "Stop criticize, start to do whatever you can do. We want facts, not words."[416]

At first glance, the movement filled the gap between the hierarchical structure of the Church and the members of the community that wanted a more active role within the community.

> "At the beginning I was skeptic to join the Orthodox Youth Movement, but then I realized the importance of the movement. What really got people attached to the movement was that for the fist time you became a real member of the community. With the parish you felt alone. In the movement you feel that you are really living the community and you make things together. There was a sense of the community that was not present before. It gave a sense of belonging to a Church and it makes you responsible for this Church."[417]

From the previous words of Metropolitan Khodr and of Raymond Rizk it is possible to extrapolate another of the movement's main purposes

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415 Author's interview with Metropolitan Georges Khodr, August 13, 2007, Brummana, Lebanon.
416 Author's interview with Raymond Rizk, August 20, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
417 Ibid.

of the movement: to face the authoritarian role of the bishops and their despotism (Mitri, 1985, p. 200). While at the beginning the movement aimed to fill the gap of knowledge of Christianity, the movement eventually turned against the hierarchy and those bishops that did not want a change in the community and wanted to maintain the status quo.

> "The first generation was especially dealing with intellectual and doctrine aspects and we had to struggle against the bishops of that time that were stuck in theology."[418]

Confronting these issues, the MJO had to face two principal adversaries in their struggle to reform the Orthodox religious community. On one side the same bishops that did not want to loose their power (Mitri, 1985, p. 223), and on the other side those members of the community that understood the Orthodox as more in line with a sociological community, a current that by the break of the second half of the last century; had enjoyed a certain predominance within the community. Metropolitan Georges Khodr recalls the first steps of the movement and the reaction among the other members of the community and the hierarchy.

> "I was very young and enthusiast when I joined the movement. We thought that we would have been encouraged, but for a long time we were considered as no real Orthodox. There was a double perception toward us. On one side we were "persecuted" and we received some pressures for that attempt to renew the Church, especially by the people that wanted to maintain their customs. On the other side instead we were also well received by the people, by certain bishops and who at that time was the Patriarch."[419]

418 Author's interview with Metropolitan Georges Khodr, August 13, 2007, Brummana, Lebanon.
419 Ibid.

The second adversary the movement had to face, and for obvious reasons due to the diametrical opposition of their visions concerning the community, was represented by those who represented Orthodox as a political community. The main pillar and the raison d'etre of MJO had from the beginning been its position against the communitarian vision of the Orthodox Church, and the reaction against communitarian feelings without religious content (Mitri, 1985, p. 198). Such strong anti-confessionalism coincided with the Orthodox stance under Ottoman control: "Nous ne sommes plus un millet"(Mitri, 1985, p.204).[420]. Such a position brought the members of the community and those of the movement embodied a political stance that attached them to the wide Arab nationalist movement and the defense of the Palestinian cause. The movement faced strong changes and expanded in light of the two main communal happenings that we analyzed above, in 1955 and 1972, acquiring certain predominance within the community especially at the end of this phase. The Synod Letter of 1975 that embedded the main ideas behind the MJO exemplified such predominance.

The Synod Letter decreed the predominance of MJO's view the idea of the Lebanese Greek orthodox religious community. This victory acted as a prelude to new forms of confrontations within the religious sphere and the manifestation of a side effect of such "victory", as will be analyzed in the next paragraphs.

2. A Struggle within the Church or a Church within a Church?

It is necessary to consider now the consequences of the movements' achievements and the considerations it advanced in the evolution within

420 Beside such emphasis placed on the vision of the Orthodox as a religious community, it is necessary to underline that the Orthodox Youth Movement is an inclusive movement composed of religious and laymen members.

the community religious public sphere. A first necessary question to consider is if such movement represented a form of the wider participation within the community or if it represented a mere struggle for power within the community. The struggle for power within the Orthodox Church was not something new. In the first half of the last century, especially in concomitance with the death of Patriarch Gregorios, the community faced an internal struggle over the Patriarch siege and saw the creation of an independent branch of Orthodoxy (Mitri, 1985, pp. 90-93). On the other side the Orthodox Youth Movement was grounded with a special emphasis on the renewal of the community religious approach, and particularly with a strong critical stance toward the hierarchy and the bishops. The movement accused the bishops of acting as authorities within the community and of being far from their parish members. The movement was perceived by its members as an inclusive way to participate in community affairs in contrast with "an institutional Church that does not give young people the possibility of talking."[421]

The final achievement of the movement's activism within the community produced the election of many of its figures in high religious offices. The actual Patriarch Ignace IV Hazim was involved in the activity of the movement, especially in Beirut, Georges Khodr, first secretary general of the movement, became the Archbishop of Mount Lebanon and Byblos, while the same Archbishop Elias Audeh participated for a short period to a local branch of the movement in his native village around Tripoli. Many other members of the movement also became bishops (Mitri, 1985, p. 147). George Nahas implicitly confirms the idea that bishops represent authority within the community:

> "The problem with the bishops is that when they become bishops they act as if they are authorities, so it creates a tension between the bishops and the

421 Author's interview with Raymond Rizk, August 20, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

movement."[422]

This tension exists despite community consensus that those authorities are a compulsory requirement of the very confessional system that constitutes them. The other side of the coin is represented by a balance between clericalism and authoritarianism. According to Raymond Rizk,

> "The mentality going on in the Orthodox community is the search for clericalism, where on one side everything should be channeled and on the other side the priests act with a certain authoritarianism."[423]

The tension seems to follow nowadays between the movement and the hierarchy. But the confrontation between the hierarchy and a movement that took main stage within the Orthodox community in the past decades, became to be exemplified by what Moukheiber underlined at the beginning of this chapter: the decentralization of the religious community between two lines, embodied by Metropolitan Georges Khodr and Metropolitan Elias Audeh. From the interviews made with both figures it seems clear that the competition between them is quite high, with the former embodying the current of the movement within the community, while the latter strictly representing the Church institutions. Even if not strictly to the political polarization that characterized Lebanon in the last years, the two figures outdistance one another. While Archbishop Khodr seems to adopt a more regional perspective and is more concerned with the role of Christianity in the region, Archbishop Audeh presents a more national attitude:

> "I am taking the side of the integrity of Lebanon, of the freedom, the Constitu-

422 Author's interview with George Nahas, October 1, 2007, Balamand, Lebanon.
423 Author's interview with Raymond Rizk, August 20, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

> tion and democracy. I am 100% for the unity of our people, the Lebanese, and not for the loyalty to other states."[424]

Such a stance permits Metropolitan Khodr to accuse Audeh of being "undeclared in favor of 14th of March bloc and he exemplifies it in receiving ambassadors and foreign political figures every now and then."[425] On the other hand, Metropolitan Audeh viewed the diatribe between the two religious currents within the community as a clash between the mountain and the city;[426] with Metropolitan Khodr from his headquarter in Brummana, in the middle of Mount Lebanon, the historical heart of Lebanon, and on Metropolitan Elias Audeh, in the Ashrafiyye area of Beirut, the heart of the Orthodox identity as an urban community. Such movement/hierarchy tension, or better say inter-bishop tension, could be the consequence of the absence of a unified communal institution. Another controversial aspect of the movement that represents a cause of tension between the two currents is its well-branched structure. This drives its opponents to accuse the Orthodox Youth Movement of attempting to create a Church within a Church.

> "It still continues. Now there is a certain tension between some bishops and us. They say that the MJO is a Church within the Church. It is a question of power. A movement of revival would mean that they are not so much active and that lay people take the power."[427]

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424 Author's interview with Metropolitan Elias Audeh, September 12, Beirut, Lebanon

425 Author's interview with Metropolitan Georges Khodr, August 13, Brummana, Lebanon.

426 Author's interview with Metropolitan Elias Audeh, September 12, Beirut, Lebanon.

427 Author's interview with Metropolitan Georges Khodr, August 13, Brummana, Lebanon.

The Orthodox Youth Movement is indeed basing its strength in the capillary structure that characterizes it (LCPS, 1996, pp. 62-63):

> "Each center has sub-centers, let's say like different branches with each with an head. It is a very democratic process. For the general elections, each *feraà* (branch) send representatives. To be member you have to come from one of these branches, that normally met every week to talk or to discuss about the gospel. Beside the gospel there are discussions on different issues: religious, dogmatic, social and practical. On a social level we discuss how to help poor people. In the movement there are medical centers and a program of scholarships. Scholarships are around 200-250 and are from high school to universities. The scholarships are not necessarily just for Orthodox but certainly a bigger number is reserved for them. At the same time we use to organize the Sunday Schools."[428]

Raymond Rizk is conscious of such accusations against moved to the movement and agrees that "certain dioceses let MJO organize things like the Sunday Schools, but other dioceses didn't let them organize any activities."[429] Elias Audeh was exemplifying such feelings through an example that also involved the organization of the Sunday Schools and their "sectarian" feelings in terms of exclusion:

> "We do things together but not really very often. Once they wanted to organize something (like the Sunday Schools.) in my dioceses. I told them yes, no problem, but the only thing is that all these actions should go under the name of the Church. So they said no, because they want to put that under the name

428 The Sunday Schools are basically gathering of members of the community, usually taking place on Sunday, which main objective is promoting religious education. Author's interview with Raymond Rizk, August 20, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
429 Ibid.

of the MJO."[430]

Therefore it seems that nowadays the tension and the dynamics within the religious sphere of the Greek Orthodox community is much more characterized by the question of religious representation and due to the confessional system, for political legitimacy, more than it is an attempt to facilitate the participation of more members in the decisions of the community.

In its final conclusion, the Lebanese Centre for policy studies report on the civil society in Beirut confirms that in light of the polarization of the Greek Orthodox community: "the only two organizations that were able to establish a well defined formal structure are the Greek Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Youth Movement" (LCPS, 1996, p. 66). The report displays other factors that lead to such "failure" in establishing a structured web of organizations. The LCPS report stipulates that the cause is not such a "failure" with regards to the limited participation of people in community affairs and their unawareness of the presence of such institutions (LCPS, 1996, p. 66).

3. Remarks on the Orthodox Religious Public Sphere

> "There is a link between the members of the community and the Church that is until now very strong. It is very much expressive the fact that Orthodox people in the region until now baptized all the children in the church. Almost around 95% of the children are baptized. This makes the link between the people and the Church very strong."[431]

430 Author's interview with Metropolitan Elias Audeh, September 12, Beirut, Lebanon

431 Author's interview with George Nahas, October 1, 2007, Balamand, Lebanon.

The strong attachment to the Church could be one of the reasons explaining such an extremely active Orthodox community in the religious sphere. It seems difficult to find such strong activism in the religious sphere, in terms of movements that criticize the hierarchy, within the Lebanese scene. The Orthodox youth movement changed the balance within the community especially in the period between the 50's and the 70's. On one side, it permitted a renewal of the religious representation and participation by members of the community within their church. The first tangible result was the feeling by the members of really being a part of the community and to have tools in their hands in order to shape their own community. Another result that is necessary to underline is that the prominent figures of the movement reached high position within the Orthodox Church, provoking a deeper decentralization and basically splitting the religious sphere into two currents: one more hierarchical and the other much more related to the movement. The current that makes reference to the movement at the same time did not appear to work for the creation of general communal institutions that would be a reference for all the Orthodox members, but engaged itself in the confrontation with the hierarchy that, according to them, did not want to change the status quo. Such polarization in terms of communal references, or authorities within the religious sphere, and the gap in the implementation of solid institutions, makes it more difficult for Orthodox communal individuals to identify a figurehead to address their claims, an occurrence that has also to be linked with the absence of a vision of the community as a sociological and political community, as we will see in the next paragraph.

It is far reaching for this study to assess the extent to which certain figures of the movement accrued power in comparison to the pre-existing hierarchy that it confronted over the past decades. The movement's consolidation achievement of power and its solid structure, has consequently

triggered counter- claims by its opponents. Loyal to the hierarchy, they accuse the movement as being a Church within a Church, a statement that has not been possible to verify in this study and hence improbable to advance deep considerations hereunder.

On the other side it is necessary to make some consideration on the religious sphere under the optic of the Lebanese confessional system. As it was mentioned above, the peculiar Lebanese system is institutionally creating sociological and political communities out of the religious communities. According to Mitri, the Orthodox Youth Movement has been always rejecting the confessional system and based its *raison d'être* on strong anti-confessionalism. However, as soon as the main figures of the movement reached power positions, they had to deal with members of the community demanding rights and act as the intermediary between the members and the public offices of the Lebanese state (Mitri, 1985, pp. 426-427). Such considerations and the compulsory requirement of an intermediary figures with the community as forced by the reality of the Lebanese system, turned a movement that started with a spiritual profile into one gaining political prerogatives whether within the community or in its relations with national institutions.

Finally, the Orthodox Youth Movement, with its spiritual perspective, opened the sphere of the community and included a more active participation for members within the religious sphere, which also assumed connotation of political activism. But at the same time, one of the main pillars of the movement, that is the necessary belonging to spiritual feelings in order to be part of the community renewal, closed the door for the participation of other members that had a perspective of the community being more enclosed to the sociological conception.

The attempt of creating a sociological community within the Orthodox and the political side of the community in relation with the Lebanese confessional system will be the theme of the next paragraph.

C. The Need for a Sociological Community

1. The Sociological Community and its Self-Representation in the Current Lebanese Scenario

> "In Arabic we use the term community for *taifa* and Church for *kanisa*. We don't like to have two authorities, one for the Church and one for the community; it is not part of our tradition or education, because we consider that hurts the basic principle of freedom. Individuals are left free to communicate this guidelines within the different contexts with total freedom of behaviour."[432]

Many of the communal individuals interviewed for this study faced in different ways the absence of an idea of a political community within the Greek Orthodox, alleging various reasons that range from theological to historical perspectives. As a follower of the former perspective, Metropolitan Georges Khodr is considering the reasons for the absence of a political community:

> "It is a kind of theological reason. The Orthodox are mainly interested in liturgical life, and they are mainly eschatological and pragmatic in political life. We have the feeling that all is provisional and we are just a little part of the all. We are a minority, we give personalities to the state and we prefer the intellectual sphere and we are not so much active in politics."[433]

On the other hand, Raymond Rizk mixes historical and theological reasons instead to explain the peculiarity of the Greek Orthodox community:

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432 Author's interview with George Nahas, October 1, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
433 Author's interview with Metropolitan Georges Khodr, August 13, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

> "The reason has to be find on two level. On one side, it is for historical reason and related to the Antiochian Church, that never presented the community with a national Church, as the Maronite for example or the Orthodox in Greece or Russia. Here it has been never in this way. There is a cosmopolitan view. We never had the idea of a Church-Nation, but to be part of a large entity, the Arab world. We never created a ghetto and we have no references abroad like the Maronite with Rome. On the other side, there is a theological reason that makes that the Church should not be linked to a land. The Epistle of Dionisius says indeed that the Christians are citizens of the heaven, of another life and so should not be related to a specific place."[434]

Tarek Mitri however alleges that the conditions for the absence of a political community has to be intended in terms of land and territory:

> "The paradox is that there is no Orthodox political community and there is a lot of diversity among the members. My other general comment is that the sense of the community is not very strong, and also is due to the fact that there is no territorial base as it is the case of other minorities."[435]

The absence of a proclaimed political community clashes with the Lebanese confessional system and its confessional representation and allocation of public offices within the state. The actual Lebanese scenario does not provide a strong community representation that can, as a community, etch the national political sphere and confront other communities over the repartition of the country power-sharing. Ghassan Tueni, a veteran of Lebanese politics, assumes that the main reason is that the Orthodox "don't believe in confessionalism", and that historically they also represent "a political peculiarity, because they were leaders of non-sectarian parties:

434 Author's interview with Raymond Rizk, August 20, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
435 Author's interview with Tarek Mitri, August 27, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

the Communist Party, the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party and because they were liberal thinkers, the leaders of *nahda*".[436] Ghassan Moukheiber, an actual Member of Parliament, is touching the issue in terms of political representation of the community:

> "I don't represent the Orthodox and I don't act as an Orthodox in the political field; I am a lay, although I am an Orthodox. In the Orthodox there is always a duality between the belonging to a community and politics, and for this reason I address everybody not just the Orthodox."[437]

Almost all the elected Orthodox members of the Parliament seem to share such a stance, as it seems difficult to lead to a public national display of their confessional affiliation. Mitri, Minister of Culture in Fouad Siniora's government and interim Minister of Exterior, is however advancing that "personally, as a minister, I was recommended to government by various personalities from the Orthodox community."[438] Such condition triggers the debate over two related issues. The first is the inevitability to deal with the confessional system as in the assumption that the Lebanese society is a cohesive sociological community. The second is the impact of such an anti-confessional stance of the community on the participation of its members in the decision-making. In a sense, this would leave national decisions in the hands of communal elites and religious figures. Bekhazi's study on the decision-making process within the Greek Orthodox community underlines the role of the elites within the community, dividing them on a double level: on one side as characterized by the duality urban/rural, and on the other side as characterized by the duality of Christian decision making/men of state and government (Bekhazi, 1989). Bekhazi

436 Author's interview with Ghassan Tueni, September 7, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
437 Author's interview with Ghassan Moukheiber, June 7, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
438 Author's interview with Tarek Mitri, August 27, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

goes further on in order to understand the Greek Orthodox decision-makers until 1989, affirming that the elites of the community were exploiting the confessional character through using a de-confessionalizing approach, in order to maintain their prerogatives. According to Bekhazi such a stance leads to a crisis in community representation and to the confrontations that such elites had to face against those Orthodox political movements that were active between 1943 and 1989, and that wanted to challenge elite's prerogatives (Bekhazi, 1989, p. 73).

As we will see in the next paragraph, during that period, the absence of a political community was not assumed as it is now. There was a considerable confrontation within the community with claims for rights and participation.

2. Political Movements within the Orthodox Community Sphere: Claims, Rights and Awareness

Besides the affiliation of Orthodox individuals to the ideological and Arab nationalist parties that emerged at the beginning of the last century, the Orthodox assisted within the community also to the emergence of other movements that had more impact on the communal sphere and less visibility on the national sphere. These movements and associations did not really address the national sphere in competition with the other communities, but they attempted at first to gain the stage and enlarge their influence within the community. An exception was represented by the Ghassanina party, established in the thirties by Gebran Tueni, father of the actual Member of Parliament and head of the daily An-Nahar. This Orthodox party that was launched on the national sphere did not succeed especially for the strong political pluralism within the community.

Many of the associations and movements that appeared at the beginning of the last century that had a more defined political structure, had

various main objectives: achieving reforms within the community, claiming rights for the community on a national confessional scale and raising awareness among members of the community. Most of these movements, mainly lead by lay people that attempted to gain more importance and participation within the community, failed in their attempts and most of them had an ephemeral existence (Mitri, 1985, pp. 141-148).[439]

Another main goal of these movements that appeared at the beginning of the last century and had wide impact during the forties and the fifties was that of confronting the hierarchy in order to participate in Church affairs. Such objective has been the pillar of the Orthodox Reformist Movement of Habib Rebeiz, a movement that left more of a footprint than other similar movements (Mitri, 1985, pp. 144-145). The movement of Rebeiz was in clear opposition to the Orthodox Youth Movement, which shared activism within the communal sphere. Both movements were established in order to achieve reforms within a community that was perceived as stuck in the past. The Orthodox Reformist Movement differentiated itself from the latter for its strong political connotation and its focus on the importance of the sociological community. Rebeiz's movement was basically moving its claims toward two lines: within the community and with reflection on the national sphere. On one side it was directing its claims in order to contain Church power within the community, while on the other side was claiming rights for the Orthodox community within the Lebanese system, in order to achieve the laicization and Arabization of the Lebanese society, and claiming for a better repartition of the public offices.

Such stance was clearly in opposition with the Orthodox Youth Movement idea of a religious community, and the two movements had strong

439 For a list of such movements and associations, see: Mitri, T. (1985). Conscience de soi et rapport a autre chez les Orthodoxes au Liban (1942-1975). Thèse de doctorat. Paris, pp. 141-148.

confrontations, especially through the articles that appeared in the review that was established by Rebeiz, *al Haraka* (Mitri, 1985, pp. 212-215). A main point of confrontation concerned the structure of power within the Church, in the period around the first crucial date of 1955. While Rebeiz's movement was accusing the MJO of just preparing the field for its figures' entrance within the high offices of the Church, the Reformist Movement aimed to create a communitarian institution, the Orthodox Superior Council, which would have stood aside the Holy Synod (Mitri, 1985, p. 217). The 1955 communal law marked the victory of the sociological community perspective, but it marked also the beginning of the decline for the collective expressions of claims for communal rights, at least for a couple of decades, and prepared the field for the following victory of the religious community perspective (Mitri, 1985, p. 421). A main reason for such failure could be interpreted in the movement focus around the figure of its leader, that died in 1967 and that coincided with the decline of its review, the main public voice for the movement, disappeared.

3. The Orthodox Political Movements Between the War and Taef: Back to 1955

The "victory" of the religious community perspective over the sociological option, marked by the Synod Letter of August 1975, did not stop the creation of new movements and associations that wanted to resume the conflict between the different perspectives within the community.

Two associations in particular arose during the civil war in Lebanon: the *Al Rabita Al Loubnaniat li al Rum al Orthodoxia* and the *Al Ghaba al Orthodoxia*. Both established as a reaction to the law of 1973,which was perceived by these movements as excluding lay participation in the affairs of the community. Their main goal was the revival of the 1955 law

(LCPS, 1996, pp. 64-66). Moreover, laymen participation in the community affairs and socio-political rights for the community on the Lebanese scenario, have been the other two main goals of these movements. The civil war and the confessional strife offered the movements the opportunities to face such socio-political rights' concerns on the national sphere. Dimitri Bitar, head of *Al Rabita* for twenty-two years, since its establishment in 1978 until 2000, explains the "national" reasons behind the creation of the League and its relation within the context of war in Lebanon:

> "The League was established in 1978, during the war, even if the Orthodox didn't participate to the war. The Maronite looked at the Orthodox as if they were not real Lebanese, like the Armenians. So for this reason we formed the Lebanese League of Orthodox, in order to affirm that we are Lebanese. We didn't participate in the war, but we just visited all the leaders, in order to act as a bridge between all the communities."[440]

Another main objective of both associations, but especially of the Orthodox League was that of restructuring Greek Orthodox community institutions. Bitar understands such an issue to be strictly related to the exclusion of lay people from the decision making of the community.

> "The Orthodox Council was dissolved in 1973 by the Patriarch and the ecclesiastics. There were lay people in the Council and they dissolved it without any previous agreement. When they reformed it they put the lay people they wanted. There is no Council now, and for this reason the bishops are autonomous and there is a strong competition between them."[441]

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440 Author's interview with Dimitri Bitar, August 15, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
441 Author's interview with Dimitri Bitar, August 15, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

Bitar goes far beyond affirming that the lack of communal institutions consequently disperses decentralized power to the hands of various bishops, making each of them "a dictator in his own land."[442]

> "The League was mainly in opposition to the rule of the ecclesiastics within the community, but did not succeed and nowadays there is any type of opposition to them, to such extent that in the last years the League had been co-opted by one of these bishops."[443]

Bitar is then giving a panorama of the Orthodox community through a sociological approach of the community and its political representation:

> "We have now Farid Mukarem that is the Vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies and he has a bit of power due to the fact that he can by himself organize a general assembly in case of absence of the Speaker of the Parliament. The Vice-president of the government is Elias Murr, son of Michel Murr, but, differently from Mukarem, he can't assume the function of the President. The League worked as for making the office of the Vice-president as truly active. The Orthodox doesn't have real power in nowadays Lebanese confessional system. Maybe only with the establishment of a Senate and the election of an Orthodox president of this institution, the community would be able to gain the power it deserves within the Lebanese political system. The Taef agreement is a good deal, and us the Orthodox we want to take our part in the power-sharing."[444]

Such stances are in strong opposition to the majority of the community is self-perception as analyzed above. Even if rendered difficult to

442 Ibid.
443 Ibid.
444 Author's interview with Dimitri Bitar, August 15, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

confirm the statements of Dimitri Bitar and his perception of the community situation, he is raising helpful issues that will be faced in the next paragraph. On one side he arose the issue of the lack of functioning community institutions in relation to the fact that such a condition results in dispersion of community power to the hands of various bishops. On the other side he questioned the role of the Orthodox in Lebanon, considering that the confessional system tends to create intermediary figures to be addressed by the state. For this reason it is important to have a look at the role of communal individuals within the community, on how they deal with the absence of communal institutions and how they deal with the fact that their intermediary could be represented by religious figures, even if the system implicitly creates sociological communities.

D. Internal Publicity and National "Invisibility"

The Orthodox community seems based on the ambivalence between its "invisibility" on the national sphere and retreat to the internal communal sphere. The comprehension of the community is based on the interpretation of this duality. Such peculiarity of the Greek Orthodox community within the Lebanese panorama leaves space for some considerations concerning the role of the community on the national sphere or concerning the communal one, as well as the dynamics between them.

1. National "Invisibility": Diversity, Weakness and the System

The Orthodox community is characterized on a national level by a certain gap in public visibility. Such invisibility has to be contended in terms of participation in the Lebanese power-sharing system and in terms of politico- sectarian claims. It results in extreme difficulty and it is

unusual to perceive such claims from Orthodox members on the national sphere, or at the same time to find figures that claim to be representative of the community in front of the state or in front of the other Lebanese communities.

One of the reasons for such invisibility could be found within the community sphere, and especially in what was previously claimed as the "victory" of the religious community perspective over the idea of a sociological community. We will try to analyze other consequences of that "victory" in the next paragraph.

At the same time it is necessary to relate and advance some considerations on the condition of national invisibility in relation to the peculiar Lebanese system. The Orthodox seems clearly in a condition of weakness in respect to the other communities within the confessional system. Such weakness seems to be a direct consequence of the decision of the community, and of its own self-perception, to be considered as an "a-confessional" community. Such a stance needs anyhow to deal with the character of the system that, in its informal rules, is basically requiring intermediary figures to be representative of the community on the national sphere who in turn should represent those channels of intermediation on behalf of the members of the community whose claims they address. On the same level, as it was mentioned in the previous chapters, the same confessional system is institutionally creating sociological communities, giving powers to communal institutions and prerogatives to their highest figures. Such ideas pose the question of determining these personalities within the Orthodox community. Even if a self conception of the political community is almost formally rejected, on the national sphere these intermediary figures are required by the other Lebanese communities and by the state, to act as communal representatives especially in times of delicate national decisions.

The Orthodox present a strong political pluralism in terms of the af-

filiation of their members to political parties or families or elites. It is anyway useful to consider that nowadays most of the ideological parties that are historically affiliated to the members of the community are basing their affiliation more on traditional or historical belonging to a certain place or a certain family, than to a strict ideological belief. The Orthodox figure that have a voice on the national sphere are mainly belonging to such "ideological" parties, to traditional families, historical elites or have been Members of Parliament for a long time.[445] Such figures do not claim to be representative of the community and do not speak for the community. But at the same time we can see that the system is requiring some of them act as channels of communication with the community. The first consideration we can extrapolate from such a vision is that these figures are not actives within the community sphere in political terms. Such a neglecting attitude toward the community sphere creates a real gap between the members and the state, due to the peculiarity of the system. At the same time these figures avoid to publicly appear on the community stage whish at the same time could represent a stage where communal individuals would challenge them and make them participate in a sphere that would anyway create authorities and intermediaries to the state.

As it has been mentioned before, the Orthodox figures that most prominently took the national stage in the last years were the various Mitri, Murr and Tueni, all of whom reject to be representatives of the community, but which other communities considered as references for the Orthodox community and that in moments of important national decisions have been channels of communication between such decisions and the community religious figures, such as Metropolitan Elias Audeh. For this reason, the absence of a real active participation within the com-

445 Among the main Orthodox figures acting in the national sphere we can mention Ghassan Tueni, the late Gebran Tueni, Elias Murr, Michel Murr, Tarek Mitri, to name a few.

munity sphere, could lead the community to be lead by religious figures that can barely be held accountable by the members of the community. Even if it represents a common "tradition" in Lebanon to see religious figures interfering in political issues, the specific conditions of the Orthodox community give them even more power of representation.

2. Community Activism: Between Institutional Gap and Unclear Representation

National invisibility does not mean that the community sphere is lacking of activism or lively internal dynamics. The Orthodox community sphere, especially in the past, has been a very active sphere of confrontation among different visions of the community, either on a religious level, on a political level, or in terms of active participation of lay people and religious figures. The participation in the internal dynamics of the community by its members has been high in the past. Most of the movements, associations and organizations that were established were grounded on the idea of reform within the community. Their main attempt was to change the structure of the community and its institutions, to enlarge the participation of communal individuals in the community affairs, and to challenge those figures that some considered as despotic.

The situation nowadays evolved considerably from what it was during the period between the forties and the eighties when communal activism was raising high among the members of the community. That period witnessed the main confrontation within the community between those that had a religious perspective of the community and those that had a more sociological approach. Nowadays it seems that the situation evolved on a level where the religious perspective won over the sociological perspective and where the line of confrontation moved from this realm to a strictly religious one. The two sides that are nowadays confronting within the

community sphere seem represented by a current loyal to the hierarchy and another grounded in the work of the Orthodox Youth Movement. The confrontation exceeds these two levels and seems to be polarized around two religious figures, the Metropolitans Elias Audeh and Georges Khodr, with the community splitting its "affiliation" to these two main figures. These two currents, even if not directly and publicly confronting one another,[446] represent the struggle within the community in order to manage the affairs of the Church. Such claims have been mostly voiced in the past, by those lay people that have a more sociological perspective of the Orthodox community. Such a condition provoked on one side a certain status quo in the dynamics within the community, and on the other side the decline of activism that is related to the idea of a sociological community nowadays the latter seems to have almost no voice and role within the community sphere. While in the past it was possible to consider such a confrontation as grounded on a lay/religious divide, it seems that such divide nowadays is missing. The "victory" of the Orthodox Youth Movement in the last decades and the attainment of high positions by some of its prominent members could be one of the reasons for such disappearance. It is possible to suggest another reason that lies in the precondition that the Orthodox Youth Movement put at the base of its activism: the necessary spiritual feeling in order to manage the affairs of the Church and for being active within the community. Such condition closed in particular the way for a strict lay participation in the affairs of the community, and left the space of the community open only for those lay communal individuals with a spiritual approach. Such exclusiveness, that does not concern the national sphere, has to be interpreted as precluding forms of diversity within the community.

446 I consider the celebration of the second anniversary of the assassination of Gebran Tueni emblematic. Both these figures participated in the homily that commemorated the late Gebran Tueni, alternating one-another in the celebration of the Mass.

Two preconditions are closing the sphere of the community for the communal individuals open participation in shaping community identity: on one side the necessary religious feelings and on the other side the absence of functioning and representatives institutions to address.

It is possible to consider the "victory" of the Orthodox Youth Movement current to have provoked wide consequences on the community, either on a communal level, on a national one. First, it seems that the defeat of the sociological vision blocked political channels of communications between the communal and the national sphere. Second, it made these channels almost reserved for the ecclesiastic and for these national Orthodox figures who are not really politically involved within the community but only on the national level. Here it remains significant to note that the latter still acquire a status as references of their community, in front of state and other communities in light of the confessional system.

Another consideration that is necessary to advance on the community sphere is the absence of communal functioning and representative institutions. The reform of communal institutions and its grade of representation have been a major claim in the past of these movements and associations with a socio-political vision of the community, and that are now left out. As we have seen the community institutions had been working until almost 1972, and until that time there have been a balance between the two positions. The absence of real institutions has as a first consequence caused strong decentralization of power within the community on ecclesiastic lines, and led to almost complete autonomy by the head of each diocese in ruling their own affairs, leaving out a sharing participation in the common good of the community. Such a condition has been seen, as it was possible to extrapolate from the interviews done, by many members of the community as a "democratic" and "plural" condition.

"We are less rational than the Catholic, we believe in St.John of Damascus, the

> reason is in the heart and we are more flexible in our theological approach and we are more in the human community and the infallibility of the representatives of Christ in hearth and we believe the Pope is *primus inter pares* but not the chief of the Church. There is no chief in the Church, there is democracy in the Orthodox Church. There is the Holy Synod. What Rome says is not necessarily the dogma. We firmly believe in the Synod, that has a democratic approach."[447]

Power decentralization on ecclesiastic lines and the absence of functioning institutions create the condition to inquire about where and to whom the members of the community would address their complaints. The invisibility and the multiplicity of references, without an institution able to gather them, could make difficult for a member of the community to have a say within the community. At the same time, the members of the community, living in a confessional system and society, need an intermediary in order to have access to the state and in order to reach public offices. The absence of institutions gives them as references; various community religious figures or elites and power brokers that are active on a national sphere, precluding a genuine intermediation that finds its base in the community sphere.

For these reasons some lay people blame the Orthodox ecclesiastics of authoritarianism within the community, accusing them of excluding a political representation of the community, imposing themselves as dominant figures of reference, due to the fact that the community is perceived just as a religious community.

This last stance, and as a consequence of the anti-confessional perspective, is in contradiction with the presence of confessional endowments, associations, organizations and structures, that are mostly ruled by religious figures and movements within their dioceses. The participation of

447 Author's interview with Ghassan Tueni, September 7, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

the members of the community, but not in a political way to the affairs of the community, makes it difficult to open and develop the community sphere in terms of discussion and changes, and at the same time makes it more complicated for communal individuals' efforts to etch on the national level.

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VIII. Reclaiming the Community Public Sphere

"Pourquoi faisait-on ainsi? Non que les anciens étaient particulièrement plus sauvages que nos délicats contemporains, mais on considérait que, puisque ledit coupable a délibérément rompu avec les lois et les règles de la communauté, puisqu'il a imposé son individualité a l'encontre de la volonté et des valeurs du groupe, et que par suite sa dissidence a causé un lézard dans le corps social, il est normal qu'il soit puni en retour par le démembrement de son corps. Oui, mais Lina aujourd'hui, son démembrement ne sera pas pour la rédemption de ce têtu corps social communautaire qui se refuse toujours au démembrement de ses membres. Non! Son démembrement à elle sera à elle, et a elle seule. Il n'y a qu'une seule chose qu'elle ne se fera pas arracher, bien que cela soit faisable médicalement: sa langue" (Appendice, by Lina Saneh).

This chapter will suggest some general conclusive remarks from the previous section concerning the three Lebanese communities: First, it aims to show the importance of the community sphere as a political entity and as a sphere of consciousness and activism. The structure of this chapter is based on the variables that have been drawn from the Lebanese case and the literature on the public sphere. Furthermore, this chapter aims to

show the potential importance in the role played by communal individuals within the community sphere in order to extend and develop the same community public sphere and the general Lebanese public sphere.

The community public sphere of the three communities analyzed in this study shows different connotations, leading toward several assumptions and future interrogatives. The idea of "communal individuals" and the role they play, or that could play within the community sphere, allows to outline some hypothesis on a possible form of Lebanese "extended citizenship". At the very base of the thesis is the idea that an inquiry onto the community public sphere is a key-tool in order to understand the functioning of the Lebanese political system and of the general Lebanese public sphere.

A. The Concept of Freedom

At the beginning of the so-called Cedar Revolution thousands of Lebanese filled the streets of Beirut to protest Rafik Hariri's assassination and asking for a real independence and the Syrian security and military apparatus withdrawal from the country. The same people felt to were individually expressing their complaints and frustration writing notes, slogans, liflets, and insults, on any free surfaces of Downtown Beirut, where the main mass-demonstrations were taking place. Lebanese individuals expressed their feelings in Arabic, in English, in French, in Armenian and in many other languages. Such display of public discontent represented the outburst of the oppression feelings the Lebanese people felt at that time. They filled Martyrs' Square, the walls of Downtown and the fences of the several construction sites in that area. These are only few examples of such public need for Lebanese individuals to have a say, to write down their feelings and claims that could become indelible in

such historical momentum. A few months after the political self-interest proclamation of the end of the Independence Uprising, a public-private company decided to buy and use extremely expensive machines in order to clean all those marks of individuals' expression. As a consequence, at the end of 2007, two years an half after the first proclaimed conclusion of the "revolution", it was quite difficult to find at least a portion of that surface with those writs.

As it was analyzed in chapter four, the events that followed Hariri's assassination, and specifically the Syrian withdrawal from the country, represented the first step for the extension of the Lebanese public sphere, particularly at the national level. For many Lebanese opposing the foreign presence in their country, the Syrian withdrawal was considered the possibility to speak out their discontent. Furthermore, how it was analyzed in chapter two, three and four, what was labeled by the international media and national actors as a "revolution" did not basically introduce any kind of novelty in the country. On the contrary, it highlighted many shadow zones in Lebanese social and political life. In chapter four we suggested, taking it on loan from the work of Hanna Arendt, that the notion of freedom is strictly grounded on the idea of full participation in the public realm and in public affairs. Those aspects that we mentioned in chapter three, which negatively characterize the Lebanese system, remained strong also after the Independence Uprising. Freedom of expression and association are still under threat at the national level, and even if the country presents a wide extended idea of freedom of expression, many issues that especially deal with the confessional system and the communal identity still represent a public taboo. We questioned there if the fact that Syrian security apparatus left the country, also meant that the Lebanese public sphere improved in terms of freedom of expression, but we should also underline that at the same time this did not affect the Lebanese individuals in their participation to the public realm, opening instead the space for Lebanese political leaders to remodel the power-sharing system, and inaugurating a vehement struggle for power still going on. The Independence Uprising touched the national sphere, but only indirectly had an impact on the community sphere and in the structure that permeates the political and social system we analyzed in chapter three.

The main focus of this study concerned the community public sphere, and it possible to claim that the idea of freedom, in relation with such

sphere, matches more with an informal field of relation than an institutional one, and it is mostly based on informal and not visible channels. How it has been underlined in the analysis of the case of the Druze community associations, some of them, even if publicly in a small percentage, expressed the difficulty they faced in working within the community without the agreement of certain predominant figures within the territory where they direct their actions. Such consideration needs to be also analyzed in relation with the idea public space that will concern the third paragraph of this chapter. If on one side such structured intermediary channels produce a strict dependency of the communal individuals on communal leaders, on the other side it is understood as a barrier in the possibility of finding within the community different positions or communal individuals that dare to speak out their dissent against their patrons. The informality of such claims makes them difficult to be recognized. Many of the Shiite communal individuals interviewed claimed too the existence of masses of "ordinary" people who dare to speak out, but that do not have the strength and the "bravery" to do so. Such condition is a consequence of the ostracism fear, that push communal individuals not to publicly display their own opinions, for fear of loosing their connections in the area they inhabit or of being informally excluded from the community. Various Lebanese scholars suggested the idea of a structural fear of ordinary people in speaking out their discontent, talking about a sort of "community internal totalitarianism", but without developing such idea in depth, especially for the difficulty in probing such claims, due to its informality and its absence from the public sphere. On the other side, mostly through informal interviews with such ordinary people, it appeared that the consequence of displaying a personal opinion can lead as being labeled as "enemy" of the community or as attempting to destroy the unity of the community.

It was then possible to find out that financial independence repre-

sented for many communal individuals the only possibility to speak out. It is the case either of the Druze or of the Shiite individuals that publicly expressed their communal discontent toward informal communal authorities and leaders. Therefore, is economical independence an important factor at the base of freedom? We suggest that the reason behind such "fear" mainly lies in the strong-grounded practice of clientelism that dominates Lebanese society, which makes low-classes ordinary people as constantly dependent on communal leaders. Two Druze communal individuals considered such possibility and both agreed on the importance of the class divide in terms of dependency to elite and communal leaders:

> "The low class people are the needy and so they are the ones that are more easily manipulated. Middle and high class people are the only one that can do something or change something within the community, because they are in certain forms excluded from such dynamic of clientelism."[448]

> "I am active within the community since 1969 and I am trying to put myself as an independent image and I think it works, but I suppose the reason is that I am financially independent. I do not personally need community leaders in order to implement my projects within the community."[449]

Also if it seems possible to reach individual freedom especially through economic independence, the chains of dependency seem too always at stake, due to the pervasive role played by those community leaders at the national and communal level. The idea of freedom in relation to the community sphere seems so going hand by hand with the notion of rights and dependency, how was highlighted by Joseph:

448 Author's interview with Manal Zahreddine, June 29, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.
449 Author's interview with Abbas El-Halabi, June 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

> "Contrary to the notion that the public is non-relational, the public world in Lebanon has been very relational. Citizenship in Lebanon has entailed investing in relationships giving access. Citizens have practiced and experienced their rights as a matter of knowing people upon whom they can make claims and who are located in critical places of access or who can link each other to critical places of access. This relational notion of rights is very different from that assumed in the classical liberal construct where rights inhere in the individualized person as parts of her or his membership – citizenship – in the political community" (Joseph, 1997, pp. 87-88).

That is about the role of the so-called plebeian public sphere, or the "ordinary" people, something that has been neglected in this study for practical reasons, but that seems quite important in a political system that many analysts consider as helping reproduce elites' power.

Such compulsive chains of dependency are basically related to another of those main clusters that characterize the structure of Lebanese system and society: the extended family and its pervasive ties[450]. Both family ties and kinship have to be considered as informal intermediary clusters of the system, that all the actors need to take into consideration and that can affect either who act on a national level, or who act on a community level.[451] It is possible to suggest that in a country like Lebanon, with around four million inhabitants and a small territory, it is difficult to escape or take the distance from such pervasive family ties that influence the action of Lebanese individuals in the public sphere. Even more

450 Youssef Zein, one of the plaintiffs that suited sheikh Nabulsi, affirmed for example that as soon as the lawsuit against Nabulsi was made public, an MP member of his family, after receiving a call from a high rank office of the Amal party, complained directly with him for his behaviour.

451 It is anyway necessary to underline that there are also many cases of families in Lebanon that are divided on different political positions. The example of the Murr family well exemplifies such consideration.

pervasive has to be considered the influence of family ties in communal individuals' actions within the community sphere, considering the strict relation in institutional terms between the family and the community.

While on one side the Lebanese people act with a strong individualism, on the other side they daily need to face what is possible to call the "mountain society", where different relational forms are practiced. As mentioned by Salam, the Lebanese are so oscillating between a communal perspective and a strong individualism. Such oscillation creates a double field of action that do not directly mean the same type of action.

The idea of freedom, not particularly developed on a community level, need to be related with the acceptance of diversity, the positive idea of group and the issues concerning the physical space of the community.

B. Diversity: Searching for a Positive Idea of Community

> "If within the Shiite you have ten different trends, there will maybe be the condition to promote fast political debate, and a change within the community will then be possible."[452]

Perhaps Lebanese share more affinity than differences in terms of national culture, but diversity within the country is institutionally sanctioned by the same confessional system that makes of confessional identity a primary institutional reference for every Lebanese individual. Diversity is sanctioned by the Constitution especially in its articles 9, 10 and 95, and it is at the base of the power-sharing system through the allocation of seats in the Parliament and the confessional repartition of the main state offices. Beside such "institutional diversity", the national sphere is characterized by a strong diversity in political position as well, exemplified by

452 Author's interview with Lokman Slim, August 31, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

the different Lebanese actors, through political parties, movements and civil organizations. However most of these actors display their own diversity according to the confessional community of belonging. Indeed the same confessional system sanctions through its institutions the creation of sociological communities. We understood the Lebanese confessional communities here in this study as political entities, due to the fact that they have communal institutions, prerogatives in terms of family law, a communal political participation in the national sphere due to the quota system, the presence of communal educational institutions and, in many cases, a shared common history and common traditions and myths.

Diversity within the community is certainly attested on a political level. If on one side we recognize the presence of different communal political parties, on the other side the community is characterized in many cases by hegemony, especially if considered in terms of physical space and the opportunity for the various actors within the community to make public their claims. We analyzed how the main Shiite parties, Amal and Hezbollah, are facing the accusations of newborn Shiite parties that attempt to find a place for themselves within the community, and in this case we analyzed a religious edict that implicitly blocked their participation in the national public sphere in concomitance with the resignation of the five Shiite ministers from Siniora's Cabinet. The Druzes are instead exemplifying their inner diversity being divided between the followers of Jumblatt, Arslan and Wahab.[453] The Greek Orthodox express instead their diversity by spreading along various national parties, even if the community highlights the absence of a communal party, for the reasons expressed above in chapter seven. But does such political diversity express an extension of the community public sphere? Often these parties express the position of a specific clan or family, and community members join

453 It is possible to understand the several violent clashes erupted among these Druze factions in terms of predominance within a specific communal physical space.

those parties for a kinship tradition, for an historical legacy or for the possibility to access the state through their channels. Such latter consideration is true also for those more structured parties that more resemble to political movements, such as Amal and Hezbollah. The affiliation to one of these parties means for communal individuals to have access to national institutions and enjoying of social assistance or facilities. While Amal is still a key-tool to access state positions and offices, Hezbollah results attractive for Shiite individuals, beside the appealing movement's philosophy, also for its access to large amount of funding and for the possibility to well-cover the role of the state in terms of social assistance for its members.[454]

Another issue is represented by the fact that such internal diversity is almost often played on a vertical level and not on a horizontal one, and concerns more the idea of power or predominance within the community than an attempt to arise awareness within the community sphere. The different actors within a community do not necessarily struggle between them within the community, but more informally on a national level. Arslan, Jumblatt and Wahab did not have public communal confrontations in terms of community legitimate representation. Confrontation became public only when clashes erupted between the different factions in sensitive areas.[455] These actors are not directly challenging one another within the community, but they instead move their struggle to the national sphere in an attempt to find wider legitimacy or to provide their

454 Due to its developed web of organizations and communal institutions, which is necessary to add the possession of a huge amount of arms, Hezbollah is by many Lebanese criticized for acting as a "state in a state". Furthermore, the "Lebanonization" of Hezbollah and its full participation in the Lebanese Cabinet, especially in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination, represents a strong change from its previous "resistance" position, that could lead to a different and extended implementation of its channels.

455 Several times in the last years these three Druze factions violently clashed especially in the Chouf Mountains and in the region of Hasbaya.

political bloc with a certain heterogeneous authenticity. While Amal and Hezbollah has been characterized in these years for their national political "unity", making of the Shiite community an almost homogeneous body, their internal communal opponents attempted to confront them in the community sphere. Also in this case a common platform within the community was missed. Furthermore such internal communal opposition, given that they often refer to a family or a single charismatic figure, remained most of the time on the level of a political struggle for the representation of the community on the national sphere. It did not showcase such civic attitude required in order to arise awareness among the members of the community or to open up the space for discussion and debate on the common good of the community.

The negative connotation of the community ideal that Iris Marion Young advances in her works seems here assuming a primary role (Young, 1990a). It seems missing in Lebanon such positive idea of community grounded on the idea of diversity and on the possibility to consider the different forms existing within the community. Diversity, even if sanctioned by national institutions and built-in the same structure of the Lebanese political system, does not find evidence on the ground. Diversity need instead to first be displayed in the internal structure of the communities. If on one hand it is not questionable the presence of political diversity within the communities, on the other hand diversity is not widely accepted by the same members of the community. Members feel the fear of being overwhelmed by other Lebanese communities or they fear to lose their "piece of the cake" in the national power-sharing system. Therefore homogeneity seems perceived as a better option than diversity, and that helps the implementation of the common good of the community, that in this way can make its claims louder on the national sphere. It is possible to suggest that such positive idea of diversity is missing within the community due especially to the strong power-struggle connotation

that assumes the national confrontation, which influence on the "private" community sphere seems widespread.

The case of the Christian Maronite community - out of this study - is emblematic and can help make some suggestions on diversity, homogeneity and representation within the community sphere. Maronite Christians are nowadays extremely fragmented in various political factions, which side in both the political blocs that nowadays characterize the Lebanese national polarization. While on one side this condition is weakening the community, on the other side seems that is generating the prevalence of a Maronite representative in the higher Lebanese offices more independent than to one belonging to a specific faction or with strong communal feelings. Is the emergence of such "national" figure the consequence of community fragmentation? It is possible to suggest that internal communal diversity, community fragmentation and the absence of hegemony within the community, allows the appearance of figures of consensus who are probably attached more to the state, than to the community. Beside such suggestion, diversity within the community can so open the way for the major country offices to figures that will be more connected with the state and that work to reinforce the state respect the community, eroding the power of community leaders. The side effect of such conditions is that communal religious figures of reference can become important actors in the political struggle, and so releasing on them strong decision-power.[456]

Is the absence of diversity within the community sphere, or its wide negative connotation, a direct consequence of the Lebanese peculiar system? Arendt considers plurality as a human condition, and the attempt to eliminate it as equivalent to the abolition of the same public sphere

456 It is necessary to mention that such suggestions have been basically taken from the dynamics within the Maronite community in the period of the election of the new President of the Republic in 2007.

(Arendt, 2005 [1958], p. 162). The lack of genuine acceptance of diversity denotes the absence of a space of criticism and dissent in an important but neglected sphere, the communal one, that instead, as being the real base of the Lebanese system, needs to develop such conditions. Instead, diversity within the community is often interpreted in terms of weakness facing the other Lebanese communities, and with a negative connotation in a power-sharing system that put strong emphasis on the idea of power. Indeed, the state, the government and all the Lebanese communities, being part of such system, prefer to deal with homogeneous community and leaders that represent the whole community, more than with a diversified community with various poles of reference.

C. The Physical Space: *al-ard*, Fiefdoms and Publicness

Although Lebanon reached a formal independence in 2005 with the Syrian security and military apparatus withdrawal from the country, it is necessary to consider the reality of such independence, in its formal and informal connotations. Formally, areas within the Lebanese territory that are not under direct state's institutions and rules, such as the Palestinian camps, still exist. The various Palestinian camps disseminated on the Lebanese soil, through an informal agreement, are not under the direct control of the state and the Lebanese Army cannot theoretically enter the camps.[457] While formally the Palestinian camps explicitly represent the

457 The events occurred in the summer of 2007 in the Palestinian camp of Nahr el Bared represents an exception that exemplifies how the rules of the game are blurring in Lebanon. An unwritten pact between the Lebanese state and the Palestinians sanctions that the Lebanese Army is not allowed to access the various Palestinian camps on Lebanese soil. Such informal deal seems a consequence of the 1969 Cairo Agreement that conceded the jurisdiction of the camps directly to Palestinians factions and tolerated the autonomy of the Palestinian *fedayyin* in order to continue their struggle against Israel.

absence of state control on part of its territory, other informal parts of the Lebanese soil are out of the control of the state. It is not a coincidence that the Beirut based Hayyabina organization, few months after the end of the Independence Uprising that sanctioned the formal Lebanese independence, released a provocative report titled Km^2 VS $Km^{sovereignty}$, putting the accent on those territories where communities, clan, movements, parties or individuals exert their own authority in the place of the state.[458] Hayyabina's report, indiscriminately accusing actors of the whole Lebanese political spectrum, pointed the finger toward those Lebanese groups or individuals who exert their own law in their informal fiefdoms. It is possible to suggest that such condition represents a legacy of the process of "cantonization" the country assisted during the civil war, which especially took a confessional character.

The strict relation between a leader, a party or a movement and its own land is a reality of the Lebanese entity. These informal authorities posses "fiefdoms" where they, on a different level, exert their own authority and which they control in different forms. We analyzed in the previous chapters the notorious case of Hezbollah and of its fiefdoms in the South and in the Beirut Southern suburbs and the armed or security control the group exerts within these territories. Although Hezbollah represents the most visible and public example, many other are the forms used by these groups or leaders to obtain a wide control on the territory, and the same Hayyabina's report does not stop on the visible case of Hezbollah, but it also mentions the case of the Chouf, of Bourj Hammoud and of some areas in the Bekaa region. It was also previously suggested the

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The Agreement was amended later, but it is wide conceived by the Lebanese public opinion that the Army cannot access Palestinian camps. In these last years several times the Army clashed with various Palestinian and non-Palestinian armed groups on the borders of the camps, but without entering inside, with the unique exception of Nahr el Bared.

458 See Appendix II.

prominent role of Walid Jumblatt in the Druze mountains of the Chouf, and the possibility for him to exert forms of control for various reasons indicated before. The same Beirut area is not exempt from the presence of such informal rulers, who publicly displayed their forms of control of the public space and that constantly increased in these considered ages of sectarianism.

Therefore, it is important to underline the possible consequences of the presence of such informal authorities on the individuals inhabiting or acting within such physical spaces. Such areas are mainly confessional homogeneous and such individuals are in most of the cases members of the same community inhabiting the territory. It seems that for such communal individuals it is necessary to deal with such informal authority in order to act within the territory. Such consideration was exemplified by the cases of various Druze associations that took into consideration the necessary "permission" of communal leaders in order to act within the territory, and the case of that Shiite publisher living in *al-Dahiyya* that was mentioned in Mona Harb's work. In many cases such informal authorities are taking prerogatives of the state for themselves.

In the ages of sectarianism such forms of control of the territory considerably increased and took strong visibility due to massive display of flags and sectarian marks, probably fearing the possible escalation toward a civil strife and starting so the race for the conquer of territories that also in this case were almost confessional homogeneous. It was not difficult in mid 2007, amid increased fear of civil strife, to find informal security agents belonging from various political-confessional groups controlling the streets of their own area of belonging.

In such circumstances, the conditions for individuals' participation in public affairs and for individuals' initiative, appears as quite complicated. Arendt suggests that the physical space has always been considered as the place where freedom is possible (Arendt, 2005 [1958]), or where it

is possible to materially participate in the political life. In such conditions seems that dissent or criticism directed toward one of these informal authorities, that also represent communal interests, difficultly could be displayed. Although the difficulty to ascertain direct forms of pressure on the individuals, many of the communal individuals interviewed for this study suggested the presence of forms of social pressure on the individuals. Lokman Slim, one of the authors of the Hayyabina's report, suggests the reason for such "invisibility" of these practices:

> "These informal authorities don't need to control everyone, they just can give them an example to follow. They just need to educate one and the others will then understand the rules."[459]

The control of the territory by non-state actors is in this way threatening forms of free expression of the members of the community, and it does not only prevent a direct challenge to such informal authorities but it also concern the same activities communal individuals want to undertake. This need to be related to the consideration that the state, or the political system, does not provide such communal individuals with any kind of institutional reference to appeal in case of violation of their forms of expression.

The access to the public space is jeopardized and the same internal community opposition seems concerned of the importance that lies in the control on the physical space in order to have a direct impact on the members of the community. It was for example the case of Ahmad al Asaad, who organized a gathering of his Free Shiite Movement in *al-Daihya*, a space normally conceived as the fiefdom of Hezbollah. With such power out of the hands of the state control, the individuals need to face such informal authorities and sometimes avoid making loud their

459 Author's interview with Lokman Slim, August 31, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

thoughts for fear of retaliation or for fear of being excluded by the economy of the community on the territory.

The direct control of the public space by such informal authorities difficult to hold accountable, and not directly related to the state, directly affects free forms of expressions within such sphere, making coinciding most of the time a specific space with a community or a communitarian leader. Forms of expression seem so treated under an informal umbrella that hardly becomes public. Therefore the public space is not in the Lebanese case, and especially with reference to the community sphere, the site of freedom. This was especially true during the ages of sectarianism, when the national struggle for power and the increasing confessional feelings pushed to an informal cantonization of the Lebanese territory.

The only solution for making of the public space the site of freedom relies in the state taking over such power in the hands of such informal communal authorities, even if at the same time we can consider the Lebanese state nowadays as basically a gathering of various communal leaders. The theory of the vicious circle seems so taking a predominant feature. Therefore it is possible to suggest that the first step to break such informal "wall of fear" needs to be taken by the same communal individuals within the same community sphere.

D. Communal Institutions: A Necessary Reference

The Lebanese system makes of the community a necessary intermediary between the individual and the state. In doing so it is granting part of its prerogatives to the same communities, leaving it especially and formally in the hands of the main communal institutions. Communal institutions manage the affairs of the community and of their members, especially on issues that concern the personal status of the members of the community.

The most important communal institution is the community council, a kind of parliament of the community, and usually a mix of religious, political and civil figures. On the other side there are other communal institutions that play a different role and that are more detached in terms of influence from the dynamics within the community. It is the case of the communal courts, which manage the family law of each community, or of those educational institutions, that especially serve to directly or indirectly transmit community ideals. The official prerogatives of the community councils concern religious issues, law, and personal status, but they often take political position in the country national power struggle.

Communal individuals, while they can avoid considering as reference the community in educational terms, they cannot avoid dealing with community institutions on issues concerning the laws of personal status. The most representative institution is the *majlis*, the council, and this institution needs to be analyzed with reference to the idea of accessibility, participation and legitimacy and considering its effective functioning as communal institution. The communal council main potentiality resides in the fact that could represent a place, also in physical terms, where members of the community or its main representatives can meet, and a platform for communal individuals' claims. Such institutions, out of state control and of the members of other Lebanese communities, clearly have to be considered as an authority within the community.

The effective functioning of the communal institutions has been one of the inquiries that concerned the study of the three selected communities, and it has been particularly taken into consideration in the case of the Druze, of the Orthodox and only briefly in the analysis of the Shiite community. The Druze community institutions have been analyzed in depth due to their concomitant structural renewal in these years. In the aftermath of the Independence Uprising, the Druze community attempted to reform the main community council that until that time was

considered as not actively functioning. How it was analyzed in chapter five, the new reformed council assumed a more representative connotation and became for many members of the community an institution of reference where to address their own claims.[460] The case of the Druze women attempt to change their position of inequality within the community is exemplificative of such latter connotation assumed by the new council. Only after the first shape of the new council and only after the new *sheikh al-Aql* took possession of its office, a group of Druze women decided to present their claims to the reformed communal institutions. According to these same communal activists, the reason for not doing it earlier was mainly due to the fact that a figure of reference was missing, and because many communal individuals considered the previous *sheikh al-Aql* as not really representative of the community. According to them, there was none to address their claims. As the specific case of the women exemplified, the reference for the communal individuals in order to change for example the personal status law, has to be found in such communal institutions. The state is in these cases out of the dynamics of internal change of issues related to the personal status, and therefore only communal individuals can actively participate in order to change such conditions, without expecting a step from communal authorities or coming from the national sphere.

However, communal institutions are most commonly detached from the members of the community. This seems especially true for the so-called ordinary people. The shape of the Druze Council for example gives preference to the so-called "educated-professional" individuals, besides religious figures, politicians and members of the communal justice. Class belonging, or what we can call as "well-education", appear as an important factor in order to have access to the communal institutions, but

460 The members of the renewed Druze community council have been elected during an electoral round that took place in all Druze areas in Lebanon.

it puts a shadow zone on the institutions in terms of accessibility and participation. The idea of the elite and of the professionals that tends to exclude the ordinary people from a real participation in the communal affairs seems a reality of the Druze communities, and it is possible to suggest that such a rule could be extended to the other Lebanese communities. Such condition creates an evident gap in terms of full participation of communal individuals in the decisions about the common good of the community.

The case of the Orthodox community represents instead more specifically the problem of the functioning of a communal institution. More than in the case of the Druze community, the Orthodox lack of individuals direct participation to community affairs. The council is almost neglected and not well functioning. As a consequence, such situation creates the absence of institutional references for Orthodox communal individuals and it decentralizes the poles of reference among different authorities in deep contrast among them on how to rule the community. The Orthodox lack in this way of a common ground and a platform for the discussion of public affairs, that in certain forms is in line with the idea predominant within the community, that rejects the presence of a Orthodox sociological community. On the other side, Orthodox communal individuals difficultly can find a reference to whom/which address their claims.

The Shiite communal institutions have been only briefly analyzed, but it is possible to highlight that not all the positions within the community are represented within the council, that especially coincides with the political national representation of the community. In the case of the lawsuit against sheik Afif Nabulsi, the plaintiffs, accusing the cleric of false impersonification, invoked the Higher Islamic Shiite Council (HISC) to take a position regarding the fatwa emitted by Nabulsi and to sanction

him.[461] On one side such plea represented the appeal by communal individuals to the official communal institution of reference, but on the other side, the fact that the council did not take a public position on the issue, exemplifies that the same council has not a real power and it is almost dependent on the political position of the main Shiite parties.

The absence, the scarce representativity, or the non-functioning of official communal institutions have as a first consequence of distancing communal individuals' involvement in the affairs of the community. On the other side it represents a trap for the communal individuals, because it is an institution of reference for the communal individuals, that compulsory need to deal with on certain specific issues. The scarce functioning of these communal institutions leaves a gap for leaders or prominent figures within the community to act in complete independence and therefore able not to be held easily accountable.

Accessibility and participatory communal institutions have to be interpreted as the consequence of a developed and extended community public sphere. A community institution represents a place, also in physical terms, of reference for the community and its members, and a necessary intermediary channel for individuals' claims.

E. National Leaders and Communal Authorities: Dissent and Informal Authoritarianism

The Lebanese political scenario is mainly composed of feudal and traditional leaders, that at the same time represent the state and which families in most of the cases have been ruling the country since decades or centuries. Such traditional leaders have also a special power within the community, being the same community the base of their national

461 For the complete text of the lawsuit, see Appendix VI.

power. Even if just members of the Parliament, or just leaders of one single political party, in many cases they tend to put themselves as the representative of the whole community from which they belong. Such condition makes that such leaders are often displaying an informal authoritarianism within the community, due especially to reasons related to wealth, historical legacy, national influence or number of followers. However, in institutional terms, such self-proclaimed authorities remain unofficial and informal.

Beside such kind of authorities, the Lebanese system, putting the confessional community as intermediary between the individual and the state, is empowering the same communities and granting certain importance to religious figures, that becomes necessary references for the state and for the members of the community. Religious figures, due to the peculiar system based on the power-sharing among the various Lebanese confessional communities, feel invested by a certain authority, and they use to often mingle in political issues, siding for one or the other blocs that struggle at the national level. As it is the case of the Druze community, religious figures represent a form of legitimacy either on a national level, for the whole Lebanese, and either on a community level, for the members of the community. In the case of the Shiite community, the political fatwa emitted by sheikh Afif Nabulsi helps understand the importance of such religious figures and the side effects of the system in terms of communal authoritarianism. By issuing the fatwa and addressing all the Lebanese Shiite, sheikh Nabulsi implicitly proclaimed himself as representative of the whole community, for religious or not religious members. Instead, how the plaintiffs underlined in the lawsuit, sheikh Nabulsi is neither an high rank office within the community, as could be represented by the head of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, neither is one of the twelve members of the community legal commission,[462] neither is supported by

462 The plaintiffs moved their accusation to Nabulsi mainly underlining such issue.

a wide consensus within the community, as could be for example the case of Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah.

For this reason the Lebanese system indirectly creates the possibility for powerful members of a community, or religious figures, to proclaim themselves as authority, that are hardly held accountable, due to the fact that the state is left out from such internal communal dynamics.

In the case of political figures it is possible to suggest that the electoral pools could represent a form of contrasting such communal authorities. However the condition of these processes are different. On one side, the political representation is following the malfunctioning of the discussed electoral law, which helps reproducing the same usual representation and a patron-client relationship between leaders and members of the community.[463]

For this latter reason, the state difficultly can intervene in case these figures displays forms of authoritarianism, leaving such a duty to the members of the community, as we will discuss in the last paragraph of this chapter. On the other side, the state, or the government, seems to prefer dealing with such figures, and in certain case to rely on religious figures of reference.

Some examples come from the communities analyzed in this study. Walid Jumblatt is normally labeled as the "Druze leader", although he is

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See Appendix VI.

463 In the discussion for the election of a new President of the Republic in 2007, the creation of a new electoral law represented maybe the most important issue at stake, beside the creation of a new Cabinet and the prerogatives of the President of the Republic. Such national confrontation on the electoral law to assume, displays the importance of the electoral law for the Lebanese system in terms of power-sharing and representation of the various communities. The focus of the discussion has been anyway directly related to the power-sharing and not on creating an equalitarian framework, how it was proposed by the Boutros Commission. It is possible to say that the draft for the new electoral law submitted by the Boutros Commission in the summer of 2006 to Siniora's Cabinet, has been completely ignored.

just a member of the Parliament and the head of a political party, but he is informally considered as the leader of the Druze community. The case of religious figures, as was the case of Nabulsi, opens the issue of religious authorities. The difference with the previous figures is due to the fact that it concerns issues of representation and accountability. Considering the role given by the system and the state to such figures, it seems difficult to hold them accountable for their stances that often touch political issues and tend to implicitly influence the members of the community. It results also difficult to contrast them, as being religious figures that a few dare to publicly challenge.

The other side of authoritarianism is represented by individual dissention. The case we analyzed above and the lawsuit promoted by this group of Lebanese individuals represents a form of dissention and a civic way to express opposition to the role of self-proclaimed authorities within the community. Beside this analyzed case, and related to the idea of freedom, it is difficult to publicly assist to forms of dissention toward communal authorities in a civic way. What instead appear in terms of dissention, are forms that take the shape of a political struggle, that do not work to extend the community public sphere, but that just represents an attempt to change the community representation and the balance of power.

Leaders and authorities play a major role within the community and at the national level, and their power represents in many cases a form of deterrence for many individuals to express their dissention. It is not possible to compare the situation during the ages of sectarianism with that of the civil war, when "dissident" in any camps were intimidated by attacks on property or people (Hanf, 1993, p. 330), but it is possible to suggest that it assumed a more informal character. It is possible to argue that the possibility to find a public display of dissention is going hand in hand with the situation of tension in the country and its informal confessional cantonization.

Such leaders and authorities, who "play" between the spheres, the national and the communal ones, are the most important segment of such vicious circle we mentioned in chapter three, especially because they act unaccountable between the national and the community sphere.

F. Communitarian Society: Internal Criticism and the Development of the Public Sphere

In August 2007, the same day of the Metn by-elections to replace the seat left vacant by Pierre Gemayel, I assisted to a workshop organized by a well-known Lebanese think-tank addressing Lebanese youth of all sorts in order to aware on the implementation of a new electoral law. The workshop gathered many young people belonging from national parties or just single individuals coming from different Lebanese regions. In the middle of a training session, one of these young Lebanese received an SMS from one of the candidates running for the Metn by-elections. The guy shared the "coincidence" with the other participants in the workshop and with the agreement of the workshop's organizer they decided to call the office of the candidate in Beirut. After few minutes of telephone call he was able to bargain his vote for a small amount of money and a tank of gasoline. When, for *par-condicio*, it was time to call also the office of the other candidate running for the same seat, many of these young Lebanese rejected such idea and hiddenly run out of the room to call the office of the candidate alerting them of a possible call, and creating then mess among the participants and the astonishment of the organizers. Such brief anecdote explains the strict link between individuals, parties and politics, and well exemplifies the weakness of what is normally labeled as the Lebanese civil society.

The Lebanese national sphere is vibrant in terms of activism or what

can be called as civil society. The same assumption is true for the so-called communitarian, or confessional society, characterized by a wide web of organizations and endowments that provides members of the community with social, medical and educational assistance. Each of the Lebanese communities presents such extended web of associations and institutions in order to assist the members of the community and provide facilities in different social realms. But both, the national and the communitarian societies, display several evident inconveniences. On a national level such activism shows its weakness in two forms. On one side, it tends to follow the political struggle for power between the usual Lebanese actors, and it is implicitly taking a side among the contending factions in the power-struggle.[464] On the other side, it displays its weakness in avoiding directly challenging the whole political figures involved in the power-struggle, although they are considered by many of these active national voices of discontent as the main cause of the internal problems of the Lebanese entity.[465]

On a community level, the communitarian society represents a low level of criticism, or challenges, directed toward the community centers of power or the communal authorities. Its main gap is that it misses a form of control of such sphere. This is due especially to two main reasons. The first reason deals with the same character of such activism. Most of the time such communal organizations depend, more or less directly,

464 A notorious example is given by the political statement that appeared on the national press on the eve's of Lahoud's term expiration in November 2007, and signed by tens of "civil" Lebanese figures. See: An appeal for the sake of the republic, (2007, November 12), *The Daily Star*.

465 One of the few associations that publicly express "civil society" discontent during the Presidential crisis has been the association *Khalass*. For a critical, but political view of the association *Khalass*, see: Ghaddar, H. (2007, November 7), Enough is enough. The *Khalass* campaign shyly underlines dialogue, not violence. http://nowlebanon.com/. Accessed November 8, 2007.

from a particular communitarian leader, a political party or a movement, and they are a tool in their hands in order to support the needy members of the community, or in order to supply to what is considered as the absence of the state. The vicious circle is evident: on one side they claim the absence of the state and they implement as consequence a wide web of communal social services. However, as they are part of the state they do not work to improve state's institutions but they maintain instead the status quo that gives such leaders their basis of power on a community level. Such kind of activism is closer in concept to Ibn Khaldoun's idea of '*asabiyya*, or group solidarity, due to the fear of being overwhelmed by other communities in the power-sharing system. The direct challenge to communal authorities is instead interpreted as a public display of weakness of a community facing the other communities, and it is often avoided for fear. In other cases such associations are not strictly depending from a political figure, a leader or a movement, but the fact that their sphere of action is based on a territory characterized by the presence of one of these "authorities", make hard for them to promote independent activities without the "permission" of the patron. How was exemplified by the case of some of the Druze associations, the territory of action, especially if it is strictly marked in confessional terms and belonging from a specific communal authority, often means that such organizations need to deal with this figure. The case of the Shiite suburbs leads also to a similar conclusion, especially considering that in such area the Hezbollah movement promotes a type of society that follows the Islamic movement's philosophy. Here, as was mentioned by Harb, it is difficult for individuals not belonging to the movement to freely and independently act in such space, and at the same time the organizations belonging from the Islamic movement difficultly have an independent policy different from that of the movement. In this latter case such organizations represent just an extension of the political party and so it seems difficult to find any internal

public challenge toward the directives of the Islamic movement.

The case of the Greek Orthodox community introduces another factor and another possible related inconvenience. On one side, it displays the existence of a strong religious activism, especially shaped in the last decades, and which emerged directly from the claims of mostly ordinary people in order to change hierarchy rule within the community. Such religious movement, the Orthodox Youth Movement, increased the participation of the members of the community to the affairs of the same, and without doubt it extended the community public sphere, by putting in discussion the ancient rulers. The inconvenience is given by the fact that such religious movement, while reaching in part the proposed aim to change the Church system, reached positions of power within the community and finished nowadays to provoke a polarization within the community in two poles, creating so a conflict between religious authorities for the control of the communal religious sphere, implicitly dealing too on a more political level. According to Metropolitan Georges Khodr, "in the Lebanese case maybe the Church need to resemble more to a civil society because it has a strong power" (Mitri, 1985, p. 210).

At this point it is necessary to underline the importance of the communitarian society and especially of communal activism. The accomplishment of such importance requires a culture of activism and of critical stance also within the community sphere. The case analyzed in these pages of those Druze women activists lobbying communal institutions for a better status of the woman within their community represents a helpful tool in order to understand the importance of such communal activism. Such form of activism within the Druze community attempted to change the condition of inequality, especially in terms of personal status law, of Druze women, considered as discriminatory for them. Personal status is merely a communal prerogatives, where the state difficultly can interfere and where decisions for changes are in the hands of communal institu-

tions or high rank leaders. Such considerations highlight the importance of such communal activism in terms of participation to the affairs of the community, that mostly affects them as individuals. Difficultly is possible indeed to take into consideration a change without an internal lobbying coming from members of the same community, who finally represent the only figures directly affected and the only ones able to mingle in such communal, but structural, issues. Hardly "nationals" figures or members of another Lebanese community would expose themselves by mingling in the affairs of another community from which they do not belong. Here resides the importance of the communitarian society and especially of such culture of activism within the community characterized by a critical challenging attitude, in order to extend and develop the community public sphere. National activism appears so not enough in order to improve the general Lebanese public sphere, because it cannot touch all the issues concerning Lebanese individuals, especially those related to the community sphere and especially those that concern the personal status of the individuals, and the structure of the community. Therefore, national activism becomes important and necessary, but at the same time it is often not taken into consideration that the base of the system, and the base of power of the main national political figures, lies in the community. For these reasons the work of the national civil society could appear just as an attempt to make "structural adjustment" of the system, but without touching the real base of the structure. Therefore it seems that in order to arrange the foundation of the Lebanese house of many mansions, it is necessary for communal individuals to expand their communal duties, working then for the extension of the whole Lebanese public sphere.

To conclude, the communitarian society, although extremely active, does not really work in order to develop and extend the community public sphere, cause it lacks of a wide culture of criticism and challenge toward authorities. Such forms are not often public and visible, and active

participation is often representing a form of strengthening the community, for fear of being "destroyed" by the others or lose power at national level, but not in order to extend the community public sphere in terms of active and direct participation in community's affairs.

G. Communal Individuals: Keeping an Eye Open Toward the Community

On July 17, 2007 I visited for an interview the Druze Orphanage in Abey, a private institution that provide with education and an house for poor or orphan children, whom Druze affiliation is almost a requirement.[466] I got there through an important personality of the Druze community and I presented in that way my own references. Before being explained the work the orphanage, I was submitted to an inquiry on my motivations and on my research by one of the decisional-bureau of the center. As I explained my research on the community public sphere and the role of individuals, the person showed a kind of annoyance:

> "We are tired of all these people coming to Lebanon to study the Druze, the Shiite, the Maronite and etcetera. We are all Lebanese, we are not sectarian and we are fed up of being labeled in this way."

I would have not been surprised if such commentary had come from an informal conversation in Beirut by any ordinary individual, but the fact that such claim was coming from a person deeply involved in a confessional institution that provide services just to members of one specific

466 According to Hayat Nakadi, the director of the Druze Orphanage in Abey, only in case they have free room they will start considering to host children belonging from other communities.

community, left me quite perplex. Several of similar episodes and informal talks helped formulating the suggestion that community affiliation is often perceived as "non-modern."[467]

It is out of doubt that confessional affiliation represents for many Lebanese individuals a sensitive issue that can provoke internal personal conflicts. Lebanese individuals enjoy indeed of a compulsory communal identity due to the peculiar political system they are ruled by, which is what is basically giving them full civil rights as members of the state. But such conflictive issue has to be related with the specific idea of sectarianism, intended as a side effect of the communal identity, especially in time of internal tension, when it assumes a negative connotation based on the negative emphasis of diversities. Sectarianism, intended as a synonymous of system, has been defined by Khuri as a public secret, or a social taboo (Khuri, 2006 [1990], p. 17).[468] How it was previously mentioned, in their daily social relations the Lebanese often avoid directly questioning the others over their confessional affiliation.[469]

Lebanese individuals seem so divided, as meaning of existence for themselves, between a necessary communal identity and a national one. Such condition results conflictive for many Lebanese. On one side, communal affiliation and identity, has been seen, as was the case of some of

467 I will not enter here on the tough discussion on the concept of modernity. What I want to underline with this assumption is that public display of communal affiliation is interpreted by some Lebanese as with a strict negative connotation.

468 Khuri affirms that while in Lebanon sectarianism is a public system, in the other Middle Eastern countries it is a private system and so a public taboo. Beside these considerations, it is possible to advance the hypothesis that in Lebanon sectarianism is institutionally public but the negative connotation of difference made it too a public taboo.

469 It seems quite easy, even if not always true, that village provenience and family name can give a lot of information on the sectarian profile of the interlocutor. It is difficult to generalize the show of sectarian affiliation, but it is evident that the communication between Lebanese is publicly ruled by such rules.

the people interviewed, as an "anti-modern" identity, only for backward people and interpreted as a source of conflict among the Lebanese. On the other side, many Lebanese faced such conflictive condition through a secular approach. The Lebanese secular approach can be also interpreted as a form of new identity and replacement of an identity, in order to create a new self-image. Such self-representation brings to dissimulate behaviour of communal identity and develop a kind of informal *taqiyya*, considering in its meaning of hiding a confessional affiliation (Harik, 2003). The case of the lawsuit against Afif Nabulsi is exemplificative of this double perception, national and communal, especially perceived by individuals with national identity and compulsive communal affiliation. Most of the promoters of the lawsuit share the secular approach and the idea of communal identity as being anti-modern. However such condition did not stop them in mingling in an affair that mainly had a communal connotation, playing in this way the sectarian game. It was the Shiite part of the promoters that endorsed the lawsuit, and then attempted to find other people from other communities in order not to make it appears as a strict communal issue: a preemptive step the plaintiffs need to implement in order to maintain their own national-civil-citizen approach. The importance of the case lied in the consideration that they acted through a civic personal code, intending civic as related to the sense of the state. The lawsuit in this way did not directly reproduce the usual struggle for power within the community or that directly followed the polarization of the country on a national level. By doing so and keeping an eye open to the community, they were able contrast a form of authoritarianism, but at the same time, giving it a national character, they produced a form of control of the community public sphere.

Such case seems important because individuals' role within the community faces two main difficulties. The first difficulty is given by the same form of action, considering the presence of many Lebanese individuals

that avoid mingling in community affairs in name of an involvement only at national level. The second difficulty that characterizes individuals activism within the community concerns the way the action is carried on, and if it has to be considered just as a form of struggle within the community, which we considered as difficultly producing an extension or control of the public sphere, but in order to gain more power.

The lawsuit case introduces what can be called as an idea of "extended citizenship". Due to the compulsory communal and conflictive identity, individuals should opt for playing between the spheres and not just in a single one, especially keeping an eye open toward the community sphere. Individuals should not become "ethnic activist", in the way meant by Hanf (Hanf, 1985), but communal individuals that act in the multiple Lebanese public spheres with a civic approach in order to exercise a control on the multiple public spheres and not just on the national one. I am not suggesting here that Lebanese individuals should go back to their community and make of it their place of action, because it would be as utopian as the complete secularization of the institutions and country's life, but I suggest that they should keep a constant look at what is happening within the community sphere, because the almost unwritten Lebanese rules of the game implicitly ask Lebanese individuals to become citizens, with a double citizenship, or better said multiple if we consider that they also have to monitor the other communities. It will ask a big effort to Lebanese individuals, but it looks like one of the possible ways to contrast the structural fragility of the political system. Lebanese individuals will then act between the spheres, just as authorities and religious figures do, attempting so to hold them accountable and erase the vicious circle.

The state at the same time is asking for communal intermediary that need to be representative of the community, even if implicitly displaying the usual vicious circle. El-Halabi is clear on this issue:

> "The feudal or the traditional leaders of the community are part of the state and the state favors those people and would like to deal with them not with the whole community. Each community has one or two representatives and it is easy for the state and for the government to deal just with one or two persons instead of dealing with the whole community or a fragmented one. This will lead to a problem, because in this way you are not involved directly with the state, but you are involved with the state through these people and vice versa. And this will lead also to give a big weight for the leaders of the community."[470]

Therefore, such eye open toward the community sphere by communal individuals could represent an option in dealing with the Lebanese system and would bring to what, according to Salam, represents the main Lebanese problem: to combine within the same system the maintaining of collective forms of expression and the creation at the same time of a political sphere where individuals could express themselves just as individuals (Salam, 1994, p. 150). Acting globally but keeping an eye locally, how could be said in other places and circumstances. In the Lebanese case the communal individuals could publicly display their differences avoiding any internal personal conflictive issue. The Lebanese system allows communities to be represented in the public sphere, and in this same way it allows individuals to be represented within the multiple Lebanese public spheres.

470 Author's interview with Abbas El-Halabi, June 6, 2007, Beirut, Lebanon.

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IX. Conclusion

"What were the conditions which made possible and persuasive such narrative of coercion, violence and social order produced by the will, pleasure and acts of the great lords? Had those conditions and the forms of domination changed over time?" (Gilsenan, 1996, p. 37).

"On Wednesday, at 9:30 in the morning I started executing my plan. After a quarter of an hour I had killed eight and wounded four. Two of them were unknown to me, the rest had been colleagues of mine for over 20 years. On Wednesday at approximately 10 to 10 I turned myself in to the police. Wednesday afternoon was my first interrogation by the general security forces. I confessed to everything. Thursday they took the first official testimony of my confession. Monday morning was my first meeting with the lawyer. Wednesday they determined the first court hearing. September 20 is our first day in court, and during this hearing I confess that my motives were financial, the result of intense economic pressure and massive debts. September 23, the first official inquiry, the death sentence is called for. October 1 the death sentence is officially called for and the case is turned over to the Supreme Court. October 17, the second hearing, I confess that my motives were not financial but sectarian, the result of a curse on Muslims and Islam uttered by a Christian colleague. October 21, the third hearing, an evening appointment beginning at 4 pm and lasting until 10. During this hearing I confess that my motives were not sectarian, and that my defense was in my chronic psychological problems. January 10, the witnesses are brought forth and all my defenses collapse, psychological, sectarian and financial. January 16, the final hearing at the Supreme Court, I declare that the reasons for my crime were the Israeli incursions onto Lebanese soil. At the end of the hearing the judge pronounces his final verdict: death. January 17 the President and the Prime Minister sign the death sentence, and in order to prevent sectarian conflict, they decide to put me to death with two others, a Christian and a Druze. All in the name of sectarian balance. Dawn of January 18, my death sentence is carried out by hanging. During this whole time, they never once ask me to re-enact my crime, as they usually ask of all the other accused" (Rabih Mroueh, Who is Afraid of Representation?).

39

A. Frame and Case

The *Intifada al-Istiqlal* of spring 2005 and the ensuing national struggle for the election of a new President of the Republic represent the basis for an inquiry into the Lebanese community public sphere, and the starting point in order to understand the functioning of the particular Lebanese system, and the general Lebanese public sphere.

Notwithstanding the events that occurred in that not too distant spring, this study first set out to inquire about the role of minority groups in the Mediterranean region and their ongoing claim for rights, recognition and formal equality. A preliminary analysis of the Lebanese case soon

provoked a departure from the concept of minority group and the idea of rights, pushing the analysis of such issue in these terms to a secondary position. Although the claim for rights in Lebanon is strictly related to the community, it is here played out in terms of power, as a consequence of the particular power-sharing system. This new perspective directed this study toward a different focus, emphasizing the dynamics within these groups and especially focusing on the community public sphere. The focus moved to an idea of community not to be considered as an indissoluble and homogeneous block, but as composed of communal individuals. Therefore, the focus of study shifted on one hand to the role of these almost invisible individuals, and on the other to the importance of the community sphere and the role of communal individuals within it.

The trajectory of this study has since the beginning been grounded on a positive idea of diversity. Such a positive idea of difference has been understood as the same essence and reason for the existence of the idea of public sphere. The challenge of a positive idea of diversity is at stake in Lebanon not on a national level, where diversity is institutionalized by the political system, but especially within the community sphere, considered here as an "invisible" space ruled by almost informal practices. For these reasons this study has been since the beginning grounded on the idea that the diversity sanctioned on a national level should go hand in hand with internal group diversity, which together will finally shape the general Lebanese public sphere.

B. Research Questions and Aim of the Study

This study aimed to analyze the dynamics within the community public sphere and the role played by the so-called communal individuals within it. The study is grounded on several variables applied to the

analysis of the community public sphere and progressively extrapolated from the Lebanese case and the literature on the public sphere. At the beginning this study assumed the existence in Lebanon of multiple public spheres, that are recognizable within the various Lebanese communities. The peculiar Lebanese confessional system institutionally sanctions these multiple spheres and the prerogatives the state grants these communities make them distinct political entities and necessary intermediaries between the individual and the state. Considering the institutional importance of the community in Lebanon, the main purpose of the study has been that of shifting the focus from the national to the almost neglected community public sphere. Such a step also represented the innovative aspect of this exploratory thesis, that aimed to highlight the importance of the several Lebanese community spheres in shaping the general Lebanese public sphere. The interrogations posed by this study concerned the role played by Lebanese communal individuals within the community public sphere in order to extend and develop the Lebanese public sphere, and in which way the functioning of the community public sphere could affect the Lebanese political system.

Another important factor that shaped this study resides in the consideration that the community constitutes both the base of power in the system and its structural pillar. It was also considered that the so-called communal individuals represent the ultimate segments of reference in the case of the community sphere. Indeed, while on a national level it was possible to suggest that such segments can be represented either by the community as a whole or by the Lebanese individuals, on the community level such a role is reserved for the communal individuals only.

This study wanted to implicitly highlight the centrality of the community public sphere, as being at the foundation of the system, and attempted to show that such importance comes from the fact that key issues that could affect the general Lebanese public sphere need to be first

negotiated at a community level. Therefore, the main idea behind this study is that in such circumstances the Lebanese political system seems to require a culture of "control" of such a sphere, a culture of activism within such a sphere, and a general consciousness of the importance of such a sphere among Lebanese individuals.

While in the previous chapter we drawn several conclusions from the analysis of the three selected communities in relation with the variables of investigation, we will resume here in the following section the general framework of the study, making reference only in general conclusive terms to the variables.

C. Inferences

"The personal is institutionally the political". This is what is possible to affirm concerning the Lebanese case and its individuals, paraphrasing the notorious feminist slogan. In Lebanon, the personal confessional affiliation, sanctioned by the country's peculiar system of confessional politics, institutionally obligates individuals to deal with their own communal identity, in their political as well as social lives. The confessional system must be understood as a pervasive system that, besides its strict political connotations, also strongly influences interpersonal dynamics within Lebanese society. If on one hand the confessional system gives individuals and communities the possibility to freely enjoy of their communal identity, on the other side its most evident side effect is represented by its pervasiveness in Lebanese social life. It was possible to argue in these pages that such pervasiveness of the confessional system manifests itself mainly as sectarianism. The term sectarianism, which represents a behavioral phenomenon rather than a political system, has been often used to define characteristics of a political system, because deemed appropriate

in a situation of extreme political tension. Therefore, sectarianism represents the evolution of the confessional system in its negative connotation, when communal affiliations become the main reference of political discourse and the same justification to engage in the national power-struggle. Sectarianism transforms the political debate in a struggle of power, ousting on one hand Lebanese individuals from direct involvement in the country affairs, and on the other hand driving out any institutional and civic perspective. In recent years, manifestation of sectarianism have definitely appeared on the Lebanese stage, making visible what Khalaf defined as a process of "retribalization", when in a politically tense period, people tend to seek "refuge" within their respective communities. Therefore it was possible to suggest that sectarianism represents an evolution of the confessional system, in the sense that, especially at times of power vacuum in the state apparatus, or during a period a possible where the "pact of coexistence" is at stake, the main communal leaders use their communal influence to project their power on the national sphere in order to obtain a larger slice of the Lebanese power *gateau*. For this and other reasons, we have labeled the period since Rafik Hariri's assassination until nowadays as the "ages of sectarianism".

But sectarianism is also what Khuri called a "public taboo", that few dare to speak about directly. It is not uncommon in a typical conversation among Lebanese for participants to inquire directly about the communal affiliation of their interlocutor. The commonly used interrogative "*min wein?*" (from where?) is explicative of this condition and reflects how geography in Lebanon still represents a clear reference in terms of confessional affiliation. If the interlocutor says he is from *al-Dahiya*, a conditioned reaction would be to assume he is a member of Hezbollah, or at least a Shiite. If the interlocutor affirms she is from Jounieh she will most probably be considered a Christian, and specifically a Maronite. Such seemingly innocuous "game" of communitarian demarcation is in

effect amplifying stereotyping behavior among Lebanese, fueled by poor intercommunity communication and fed by superficial social relations.

The physical connotation of sectarianism is displayed in the strict relation between the community and the land. Especially during the "ages of sectarianism" this strict relation has led to the establishment of publicly visible communitarian "fiefdoms" or communitarian leaders' strongholds. In such a race to "conquer" the public space, most of the Lebanese groups increasingly marked their space with sectarian symbols, from confessional signs and martyrs' posters, to flags and slogans, with the ultimate goal of making visible the control of the space by a specific faction. This was apparent in the districts of Koreitem, Hamra, Basta, and Verdun, all areas patrolled by informal security groups mainly composed of *shebeb* who control the whole "fiefdoms" on their *mobilette*. These are just a few examples that today have their own little reference at a micro-level in the subdivision of the space of the Downtown Beirut space and the establishment of an imaginary borderline that divides the Lebanese on the new North/South axis, that has replaced the East/West "Green Line" that had characterized the civil war period.

The polarization of the political struggle, well exemplified by the subdivision of the Downtown Beirut space, represented the other side of the coin, with two major political blocs struggling for power on the national level. Both blocs at the same time tended to represent themselves as confessionally heterogeneous, staging in this way a real fight for their vision of the Lebanese nation. It was in this polarized struggle that the Lebanese system showed its power of pervasiveness in people's lives. Politics is ubiquitous in Lebanese daily life, whether in taxi discussions, on a television show or in press headlines. The same streets reflect this influence of politics in daily lives, due also to the previously mentioned public space delimitations. Against such a scenario of pervasiveness and political polarization, there is little room for those who wish to side with

neither of the two proposed political options. It has become extremely difficult publicly not to side with either of the two political blocs, the so-called March 8th or March 14th coalitions. Political life appeared so pervasive in these ages to the extent that it recalls the dynamics within the Greek *polis*, when it was mandatory by law to take a side, with the consequent impossibility to remain neutral, at the cost of losing one's citizenship rights. Everything made public becomes politicized and in turn politics invades the public sphere, also through billboards and commercial advertisements that drawn on from the country political situation. To such extent that also the national civil society risks everyday to fall in the polarized struggle for power, losing so that autonomous character required for the control of the public sphere. Even more so as each issue will finally end up as a sectarian issue. Lebanese individuals contrasted such pervasiveness and increased social pressure with their only defense: frustration and abstraction.

The basis of such pervasiveness of politics can be found in the same confessional system. The confessional system is a political system that makes the community a necessary intermediary between the individual and the state and it takes at a national level the shape of a consociational system, based on a negotiated consensus among the main actors. Here appears the vicious circle that makes of the community the intermediary in order to reach the state, which is itself mainly composed of various typologies of elites that mostly also represent communal authorities and confessional references. The state in Lebanon today is definitely composed of a gathering of communal leaders.

For these reasons the same concept of state appears in an extremely weak condition, to the extent that it is necessary to question the very existence of the state. According to Chabod the state is the combination of various factors and prerogatives, but none of them in particular (Chabod, 1961, p. 144). It seems so hard to recognize the state in Lebanon,

where a real sense-of-the-state is missing, and where it is always possible to mistakenly blur the government and the state.

Such considerations problematize the lack of concrete and functioning "rules of the game", creating a situation where the national constitution is regularly treaded upon. Such blurring of the rules of the game goes hand in hand with well-established informal practices. These considerations challenge the held notion of Lebanon as one of the most democratic countries in the region. The appearance of fair democratic elections are frustrated by those informal rules that regulate the electoral sessions, as they display the absence of a real rule of law. If on a national level public appearances tend to hide such informal rules, it is within the communities that such an undemocratic model becomes a reality. Patron-client relationships still represent the base of power of communal leaders

and the way for them to have access to state's offices. At the same time, the national civil society faces considerable difficulties in reaching its set goals without having political or sectarian affiliations. The system is so pervasive that the national civil society runs the risk of succumbing to the polarized struggle for power, thus losing the autonomous character it requires to become a legitimate actor in the Lebanese public sphere.

Lebanon is often presented as a country that was established in the name of providing rights for its diverse communities, in a democratic form, with wide freedoms for thought and expression; a country grounded on a strong system economic liberalism fed by a peculiar sense of individualism. Such bases display what Arendt defined as a mercantilized society, where people present what they sell and not what they are, structurally corrupting interpersonal relation (Arendt, 2005 [1958], pp. 154-155). Dependency, connections and intermediaries represent the real rules of the game, and they implicitly influence daily relational time.

It is in this connotation of freedom that lay the prerogatives of the community facing a state that emerges extremely weakened. The community represents the intermediary for individuals to reach the state, but the community is also a Pandora's box where various other clusters operate as intermediaries. Consequently, this enables the intermediaries to develop a self-conception as having representational rights, that allows them to present the claims of their "clients" on the national sphere, or better still in front of the hypothetical state (Joseph, 1997). Such intermediary clusters are political parties, mostly with confessional or kinship affiliations, religious figures, notables, *zu'ama* or traditional elite. In turn, the dynamics of these clusters are all based on a patron-client relationship that is never purely binary. According to Makdisi the Lebanese individuals cannot obtain benefits simply on the basis of citizenship's rights, because jobs, housing, telephones and education were guaranteed not by the state but through appeals to deputies and ministers who were

themselves appointed or elected according to sectarian laws (Makdisi, 1996). The cluster par excellence among these intermediaries is made up of family ties or the extended family. These extended families with roots on Lebanese soil going back centuries, with their own history and foundational myths, have created a sort of feudal leadership over their communities or mini-states. First is the family, and then the community. But the family is normally composed of members of the same community, and the community represents the "safe haven" of family law, that finally is the real base of the Lebanese political system.

Here lies the difference between the national and the community sphere, and the wide public neglect of its internal dynamics. Looking at it from the top and from an extra national perspective, the community sphere resembles more what can be referred to as a "private" sphere. It appears as private because members of other communities cannot easily penetrate the boundaries or mingle in the affairs of another community, and because the state, or what is representing it, is not allowed to mingle in community affairs.

It is in this importance of the community sphere that the vicious circle grounded in the Lebanese system becomes more visible, considering that the same figures of reference on a community level are also the references at the national level. At the same time the direct relation between the individuals and these references within the community sphere are almost neglected, and they do not find public visibility at the national level. The importance of visibility of communal issues at a national level plays here a fundamental role, and it is the reason of existence of the said confessional system.

Such connotations question the very existence of the idea of a community public sphere, which is instead institutionally sanctioned by the confessional system, that sanctions the creation of these multiple public spheres, in Fraser terms (Fraser, 1993), identifying them with the Leba-

nese communities. Its importance comes out from the prerogatives that the system grants to the communities in terms of political representation and communal institutions. The existence of such a sphere and the fact that its ultimate segment is the communal individual in its first sphere of action, gives an idea of its importance. This is a sphere that, lacking of functional, participative and representative communal institutions, does not present formal rules of engagement. It is governed by informal and unofficial political authorities, or by religious references with strong influence on community's members. The difficulty in managing such a community sphere has to be associated with the same difficulty in holding accountable such communal references, due to the gap of the confessional system in providing individuals with institutional tools in order to contrast them.

Here seems to lay the extended duty of Lebanese "communal individuals", intended in this study as those individuals that are active within the community public sphere. The community public sphere thus appears as a sphere where the communal individuals are the only actors able to extend the public sphere and to exert a sort of control on its internal dynamics. The communal individuals appear as the only segment able to initiate changes on a community level, especially as on certain issues the changes cannot come from the national sphere. The examples that support such assumptions concern the reforms of an unequal law of personal status in gender terms, the participation in communal institutions and the control of the community sphere by self-proclaimed authorities. For these reasons, at one level the confessional system requires communal individuals to be conscious that the community sphere is a significant sphere and a first field for confronting national and communal rulers. Missing the first step in the community sphere and moving the focus directly to the national sphere seems at this point a non-sense.

The community sphere is already a place of activism, but of a type of

activism based on the idea of intra-group solidarity, referred to by Ibn Khaldoun as '*asabiyya*, and not on the idea of extending the community public sphere. This perspective is grounded on the fear that internal division means on one hand weakness and on the other being overwhelmed by the other Lebanese communities. The analysis of the community sphere needs therefore to take into consideration that the focus on a national level is always in terms of power, or better said in terms of power-sharing.

The importance of the community public sphere thus relies on its ultimate segment: the communal individual. While on a national level the segments of reference are the individuals and the communities with the latter overwhelming the former, on a community level the individual seems the ultimate segment of such a sphere. According to Habermas, with reference to political parties in nineteenth century Europe, the intermediary clusters need to work in terms of public sphere just as the other actors. Habermas, in his enquiry on the public sphere, is taking into consideration the role of private associations, political parties and the mass-media, which are all considered intermediaries between the individual and the state. Habermas is adding the consideration that, in order to have a public sphere organized with a democratic formation of the opinions and the wills, these intermediary clusters also need to be organized in their internal structures according to the principles of the public sphere (Habermas, 2005 [1962], p. 241). In the Lebanese case, such intermediary role is institutionally granted to the various confessional communities. Such communities need so to function in terms of public sphere.

For all these reasons it is possible to advance the idea of communal individuals enjoying a sort of "extended citizenship", or better said a multiple citizenship, that needs to be applied both at the national and at the community level. Such multiple citizenships are connected but

autonomous, and they are not dependent on the personal identity of the individuals, either if with a marked national identity or a stronger communal identity. According to Salam, the problem of citizenship in Lebanon is not in the absence of the individual, but in the fact that it is not politically recognized (Salam, 1998, p. 150). I will instead suggest that Lebanese individuals enjoy a double or multiple recognitions in terms of citizenship's duties, Therefore, beside the initial consideration that the Lebanese confessional system requires a culture of "control" of the multiple community public spheres, it is possible to advance that the same system demands Lebanese individuals to assume such multiple citizenship's obligations.

Such extended citizenship should be implemented in name of a positive affirmation of difference and going along side with what Young defines as a positive idea of group, which implies the acceptance of diversity within a community (Young, 1990a). The idea of difference and diversity, that is institutionally sanctioned and is represented by the prerogatives and rights granted to the Lebanese communities, it is in Lebanon almost understood as opposition, with the identification of equality with sameness and difference with deviance or devaluation, in the terms considered by Young with reference to the idea of community in liberal societies (Young, 1990a, p. 11).

> "Difference now comes to mean not otherness, exclusive opposition, but specificity, variation, heterogeneity" (Young, 1990a, p.171).

The resultant general Lebanese public sphere is thus composed of multiple public spheres represented by the confessional communities and a national public that, due to the system, resembles more the arena of power struggle. As a consequence the community public sphere becomes fundamental in order to extend the general Lebanese public sphere. The

importance of the national public sphere is limited to the extent that it cannot reach to manage all the issues sanctioned by the confessional system and that mainly concern the community sphere.

Lebanese individuals therefore need to publicly split their identity and divide their focus, to make the community sphere a public one and to work in order to extend the general Lebanese public sphere. In order to achieve this goal, Lebanese individuals need to "play" between the spheres - the national and the communal ones - and to engage simultaneously in several public spheres, never in a single one. Public visibility at the community level is indeed source of potential power and needs to be actuated through the consciousness that citizenship has to be played also and fundamentally on a community level. The idea that communal affiliation and citizenship are not compatible needs to be dismissed. The Lebanese confessional system sanctions multiple identities and multiple spheres of action, therefore it is possible to suggest that it also sanctions multiple citizenships.

It is possible to conclude such a study in a somewhat controversial manner, but with the intent of opening up future areas of investigation. Eickelman assumes that the public sphere is usually the place between the individual and the state (Eickelman, 2002). Considering this view, is it possible to affirm that Lebanese confessional communities, which are institutionally recognized as the necessary intermediary between the individual and the state, represent the real essence of the public sphere in Lebanon?

D. Opening Future Ways

The Lebanese system of confessional politics has been blamed for many of the country's problems and is considered the main source of

Lebanon's political instability. I attempted to show in this study that the confessional system is not bad in principle, cause granting collective rights to confessional communities, but that its composition of many clusters mainly working in informal ways and the absence of defined rules of the game, complicate its correct functioning and finally damage the Lebanese individual.

Many authors and Lebanese activists considered secularism as the only "final solution" to resolve Lebanon's problems. This is due to doubts that institutionally homogenized rules of the game will prevent difficulties or that they will lose the challenge laying within the Lebanese entity, that resides in the potential positive affirmation of diversity. It was not the objective of this study to identify the best system of government ofr Lebanon or inquiring its level of democracy, but to explore solutions to the current impasse of the system, considering also the fact that since its establishment the confessional system has been considered as a provisional political formula and has been periodically reshaped in its repartition of confessional power. This study of the community public sphere instead has been related more than on democratic theory on the idea of the functioning of the political system. The focus this study put on the community public sphere intended to emphasize the benefits of developing the community public sphere as a means of improving the functioning of the overall system.

Behind this study also lies a practical aim. I hope that this work will push Lebanese individuals to question the situation within their respective communities before taking to the stage of the national sphere. Being Lebanese they will have more possibilities to break the barriers of social estrangement that I faced during the fieldwork. Such a potential approach can then be considered as a form of self-criticism, something that is a rare currency on these shores. This exploratory study has the intention and the hope that further studies will be done on the dynamics within the

community sphere, especially in order to give visibility to a sphere whose importance I hope has been highlighted herein.

This thesis faced many issues that despite not being touched on deeply here, can help open new areas for future researches. The first examination concerns the same system and the prerogatives it gives to communities to the detriment of individuals and of the state. Indeed, it is possible to understand the Lebanese confessional system as a case of granting group-specific minority rights. This approach invites looking into seminal works on multiculturalism and minority rights, even if these studies have been applied in different contexts. Following theories on minority rights, Kymlicka affirms that, giving rights to communities, illiberal ways could appear within the same community (Kymlicka, 1999). Conscious of the potential pitfalls of using theories applied to liberal democracy state alongside the peculiar Lebanese system, it has to nevertheless be mentioned that Lebanon is in fact considered by some authors as a liberal democracy. It is therefore relevant and appropriate to consider the strong liberalism that shapes the Lebanese model before completely dismissing the potential of such analytical ideas. Thus, is it possible to question the fact that as the confessional system grants with rights to each community is it at the same time denying rights to individuals in the public sphere? The issue, analyzed in general terms in the framework of minority rights theories, is understood by Kukathas as being played on the possibility for a member of a community to enjoy an exit-way from the system (Kukathas, 1995), while Green instead questions the sacred right of non-interference in internal matters (Green, 1995). Kymlicka understands it instead in terms of internal restrictions and external protections (Kymlicka, 2001).[471] More studies on the system and the possible application of minority rights theory in a framework of liberal democracy

471 Will Kymlicka gave a lecture in 2006 at the American University of Beirut, but he did not focus on the Lebanese case in terms of minority's rights.

could be helpful to further examine the Lebanese political system and its functioning. Furthermore, it could be useful for those who are studying minority rights to extend their framework of study that normally focuses on situations where a minority faces a majority, to also consider the peculiar Lebanese case, where all communities are granted rights, albeit in a constantly negotiated fragile balancing act. The final interrogative can be resumed as: if the community public sphere is not open and developed, thus assuming "illiberal" forms, could this be related to the very structure of the confessional system? Do groups granted with rights and full political participation lose the aim of confronting themselves within the national sphere? Such latter dynamic, especially in fragmented societies, has to be interpreted as a pillar in terms of rediscussing the general public sphere.

Even though we considered the confessional system as not bad in principle, there are still structural issues that stand-out as relatively imbalanced. Indeed the confessional system on one hand institutionally sanctions gender inequality and does not provide individuals with an exit option from the community, rejecting the existence of a community of civil status. On the other hand it neither reserves any office in Parliament to non-confessional actors, nor does it give equal opportunity for all Lebanese to reach high ranking state positions, thereby implicitly discriminating against the members of the smaller communities. In this latter case the introduction of a more representational system and a rotation formula at the top could help improve the system in terms of equal opportunities, but these will not solve the underlying problem.

One of the most important issues in the Lebanese system concerns the weakness of the state and its inability to have complete sovereignty either in physical terms or as being the unique authority within the country. State weakness has to be understood in terms of facing communities' prerogatives and the role of the individuals within the community sphere. To

resolve such an issue it is possible to suggest the establishment of a sort of *ombudsman*, who would be able to institutionally connect the national sphere with the community sphere, and who, by definition, will represent the interests of the wider Lebanese public and be a figure of reference for the members of all the Lebanese communities in their complaints.

E. Coda

Many Lebanese and many scholars inquiring on the Lebanese case often evoked the words expressed by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Lebanon in 2001, when he suggested that Lebanon was more than a nation, a message of interculturality, where the challenge of dialogue is paramount.[472] Lebanon has a homogeneous culture, and it is extremely difficult to say that Lebanon is composed of many different cultures. The Lebanese are one. They have religious differences that go hand in hand with different perceptions of the national history and of the national ultimate identity, but the culture is one. It is easy to find this uniqueness that is common to all Lebanese, in music, food, culture, the arts and in the ways of considering politics in general. The losing point is in what Khuri labels as exclusivity (Khuri, 2004, p. 236). Each group believes in its difference, which sadly does little to create a positive idea of diversity but instead stresses exclusivity. Therefore the big loser in Lebanon is the positive idea of difference. The main trend is to appear unified without a public display of diversity. Fear of being overwhelmed, commonplace stereotyping, poor knowledge of each other, and a history of inter-community conflicts together contributed to the preponderance of negative connotations surrounding diversity. The concept of diversity in Lebanon

472 Pope John Paul II considered that Lebanon "est plus qu'un Etat, il est un message pour l'Humanité"

does not have positive connotations and this is often replicated into the public sphere in terms of political power struggle. It is difficult to know if this is due to a flaw in the confessional system that ostentatiously recognizes communities yet readily restricts individual rights.

Lebanon has lost the positive aspect of difference, especially on a sub-national group level. Although the country was established on the institutional idea of diversity, this diversity is now almost considered as a source of conflict. Individuals avoid positively considering themselves as members of a particular community. The public rejection of communal identity, interpreted as a source of problems, in turn impairs the emergence of a more constructive and conciliatory approach towards multicultural diversity.

Instead, Lebanon can be considered as a pioneer in a phenomenon that is increasingly appearing in today's globalized world, where sub-communities are mushrooming and feelings of affiliation to other imagined communities other than from the state are becoming more common. Such new forms of self-identification and cultural bonding are reshaping the idea of modernity and creating new forms of multiple citizenships. Lebanon has to be understood as a forerunner in this realm, but the ongoing pattern of power struggle that characterizes its national sphere makes such a peculiar "modernity" and its implicit diversity lose its positive potential and instead assumes a negative dialectic relationship.

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Glossary

'al-Haqiqà – the Truth

'amm – public

'ashura – Shiite celebration

'asabiyya – group solidarity

ayatollah – high-rank Shiite sheikh

bey – Ottoman military title

al-Dahiya – the mainly Shiite Southern suburb of Beirut

da'wa – religious call

fatwa – nonbinding religious edict or opinion issued by a marja'

faqih – Islamic jurist

hala al-Islamiyya – the Islamic Shiite situation/Islamic Milieu

ijtihad – religious interpretation

imam – the leader of official prayer rituals

juhhal – the Druze uninitiated who do not practice religion regularly (also called jismani)

khassa - private

majlis – mourning gathering (for Shi'a) or generally an institutional Council, a gathering or an assembly

marja – a prominent expert in Islamic jurisprudence

mufti – head of appeal court

omumi - public

rijjal al-din – men of religion

sayyed – cleric honorificence. From the same family of the Prophet.

shahid – martyr

sheikh – religious man

sheikh al-aql – the highest rank in the Druze court system

sheikh al-mashayikh – the supreme sheikh

ta'ifa – sect

taqiya – religious dissimulation; the camouflage of one's religious identity in times of danger

tawhid – oneness; the Druze faith and belief in the abstract nature of God

'ulama – Muslim religious scholar

uqqal – the Druze initiated who practice religion regularly (also called ajawid)

wasta – connection

waqf/awqaf – endowment, proprety of a community

wilayat al-faqih – the guardianship of the governance of the jurisprudent (in Shi'a terminology)

za'im/zu'ama – top political leader whose power base extends far beyond his immediate family or village. Feudal leader

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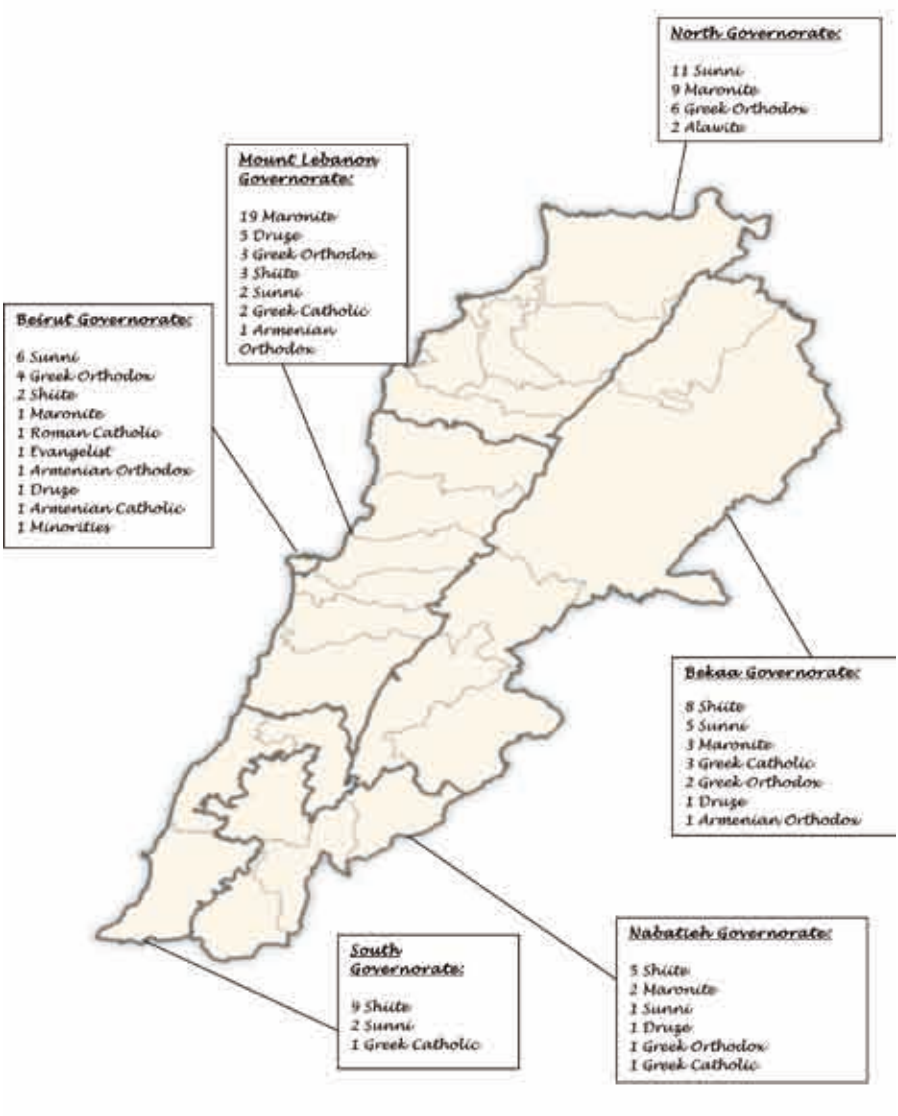
Appendix I

Map of Lebanese Constituencies and Confessional Quotas



Appendix II

Km² VS Km^Soveregnity: Hayyabina's Report

10.452 Km²

During 2005, the issue of independence was a key subject of debate at all levels of Lebanese society, from political elites, to first-time activists demonstrating in the streets. Unfortunately, the massive protests and "free elections" have fallen disappointingly short of achieving genuine independence, and the movement has lost as much momentum as it has credibility. For how can we celebrate Lebanon's liberation from foreign occupiers when extensive territories are outside the complete control of the state? Overlooked in the Independence '05 campaign were demands for complete sovereignty of the Lebanese state over all its territory and as a result, Lebanese remain vulnerable to threats by internal factions, possibly more so than by outside aggressors.

Perhaps the two main, indisputable criteria which define the sovereignty of the state on a piece of land within the Lebanese territories are:
1- The extent to which Lebanese law is abided by.
2- The degree to which the institutions of the Lebanese state, civil and military, are able to enforce Lebanese laws and/or all governmental decisions.

It is enough for the Lebanese citizen to read the newspapers each morning to know these two criteria are not met. He or she can see that every day there is news that shows the sovereignty of the Lebanese state is appallingly feeble. In one region, the Lebanese police are required to collaborate with a so-called "security committee" before their police forces can arrest a fugitive, and in a second, the Lebanese forces must wait until the unofficial "Lord" of the region agrees to hand over a criminal, and moreover they sometimes must wait for this person to deliver the fugitive himself. In a third region of Lebanon, the fugitive can run freely, make statements, press conferences, and television interviews. In a fourth region, a religious group can decide what is prohibited and what is not.

The most puzzling and alarming aspect of these violations committed by internal parties is that the Lebanese government does not react as if it has been compromised or affronted, but rather negotiates with these aggressors of its sovereign privileges as legitimate competitors, thereby giving up its duty to defend its citizens' rights and forfeiting its own right to hold those aggressors accountable for their wrongdoings.

Campestan

Campestan is dispersed over various regions of Lebanon and is populated mainly by Palestinian refugees. Mukheimstan started to take shape when Palestinians fled to Lebanon and was further fortified after the signing of the Cairo Agreement between the PLO and the Lebanese state, the latter of which consented to endorse the agreement under the implicit threat that violence would erupt if it abstained. This agreement indirectly designated the camps as "autonomous" territories outside the control of the Lebanese state. Even though the Lebanese parliament voted to annul the agreement, there is overwhelming evidence indicating the camps continue to defy the sovereignty of the state. Moreover, outside the camps, various military bases exist which further constitute an attack on the state and an insult to its sovereignty.

Maradestan

Maradestan covers roughly the entire Zghorta district in north Lebanon. This territory is dominated by Mr. Suleiman Frangieh and his military-political organization Al Marada. Since the last elections, which witnessed the future of Suleiman Frangieh to win a seat in parliament, many testimonies have emerged demonstrating the extent to which this territory is existing beyond the sovereign borders of the Lebanese state. On July 1st, 2005, one of Mr. Frangieh's local supporters, Youssef Wajih Frangieh killed two supporters of the Lebanese Forces Party (headed by Samir Geagea), and up till now the Lebanese security forces have not been able to capture him. After the election, Al Marada launched a threatening campaign against Suleiman Frangieh's opponent, the MP Samir Frangieh. The security forces did not do anything to stop the aggressors and when the MP Samir Frangieh inquired about the hesitation of the security forces to fulfill their duties, he was told that Zghorta had a "special situation."

Hezbostan

Hezbostan spreads over three main territories that are located in the Bekaa, Beirut, and the South.

Hezbostan Beirut

The main base of support for this branch is "ad-Dahiya," the southern suburbs of Beirut and Hezbollah's capital. Although there are some checkpoints for the Lebanese army, which gives the illusion of Lebanese sovereignty, Hezbollah and its civil, religious, military, and security apparatuses, have the last say. The lack of Lebanese sovereignty in that area is not only evident with respect to security, but to almost every aspect of life, even the development of the region. A clear example of this is the dispute that erupted between Hezbollah and the former Prime Minister Rafic al Hariri over the Ouzai Bridge Project which ended in June 2002 with Hizbollah calling off the project.

Hezbostan in the South

After the Israeli withdrawal in 2000 from the south of Lebanon, the freed regions were not taken over by the Lebanese government but were handed over to Hezbollah which had been ruling over this area and taking up the duties and responsibilities of the Lebanese state. Hezbollah is different from all other parties and forces which assume some of the state's sovereign privileges because Hezbollah shares with the Lebanese state the decision-making authority to wage ware against Israel or declare peace.

Hezbostan Al Bekaa

In addition to Hezbostan ad-Dahiya and in the south, Hezbollah dominates over large areas in the Bekaa valley and Al Hermel along with some tribes. In this area, the government presence is limited to the running of administrative departments and public schools and some police stations and seasonal counter campaigns on illegal farming.
Apart from this, it is noteworthy to mention that the northern Bekaa, which includes a section of the Syrian-Lebanese border, is also controlled by Hezbollah.

Armenestan

Just as the symbolic or real violation of Lebanese sovereignty is not taking place at the same level in each area, the ways these violations are manifested is not the same. In the case of Armenistan, located in the northern suburb of Beirut, we see that at least once every four years, on the occasion of the parliamentary elections, Armenistan is not under the complete control of the Lebanese state as Bourj Hamoud/Armenestan becomes the unrivaled turf of the Tashnaq party.

Jumblatistan

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war and the establishment of the Ministry of the Displaced, the authority over the return of displaced to the Chouf and Mount Lebanon has been in the hands of Mr. Walid Jumblat, regardless of whether he was the head of this ministry or whether his opponent held the position. Effectively, Mr. Jumblat has nearly complete power over the territory, as he can allow and deny anyone he chooses return to the Chouf. The limited sovereignty of the state over the Chouf is due to several factors. One is that the Chouf has a special legitimacy because, as an entity, it predates the Lebanese state. Another is the structure of the Chouf society where Mr. Jumblat possesses a near-holy standing that is beyond politics and state sovereignty.

Amalestan

Amalstan is also located in the south and stretches from Al Ghaziye up to the Israeli withdrawal line of 1985. Even though the nature of the control of the Amal Movement does not exceed that of other groups, it acts as Hezbostan's bellboy, and therefore it is partisan to the aggression policy towards the sovereignty of the Lebanese state.

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Appendix III

"Uprising within the Uprising"[473]

Samir Kassir
An-Nahar: April 1, 2005

Perhaps the local Lebanese need to be distanced from the routine of following the daily events in order to sense the thirst for answers that is mostly felt by those Lebanese living abroad and thus realize the missing angles of this historical moment and become concerned about how to achieve its full potential.

Whether travelling to Europe or the Arab Gulf, the person coming from Beirut is greeted with a mixture of pride, zeal, curiosity, doubt and fear.

He soon notices that the fear sensed by expatriate Lebanese does not only spring out of what they hear about the series of bombings, but out of doubting "the Lebanese politician," whoever this politician might be. One would eventually find himself pushed to reshape his understanding of independence in a way that goes beyond its direct political dimension especially that whenever he returns to his daily follow-up on events, he senses the beginning of a disappointment that reaffirms that daily politics have not grasped the size of the achievement they helped produce.

It might be still early to question the opposition while the battle is not over yet. Criticizing this opposition might also be ill-placed after it came up with a new comprehensive statement that could be described as good

473 The article has been originally written in Arabic with the title *Intifada bil Intifada*.

on the overall even if it fell short of living up to the historic moment. Still, it might be necessary, during this transitional phase, to assess what has been called, and rightly so, the Independence Uprising (Intifada in Arabic). The statement issued yesterday by the opposition did not do that, despite the fact that it was released in the first meeting held after the March 14 unprecedented protest and after it has become certain that Syrian troops and the Baath regime intelligence in Lebanon were withdrawing in such a speed that makes of this withdrawal/victory a huge historic event.

As for the March 14 protest, not much has been said about it, or not what was supposed to be said anyway. First, looking at net figures, this protest has been the biggest opposition demonstration in modern Arab history (excluding national events sponsored by authorities, funeral demonstrations whether that of Abdul-Nasser, Um Kalthum or Abdul-Halim). In relative terms, i.e. relative to the number of resident inhabitants, this demonstration might be one of the biggest in world history that compares only to the summer of the French Revolution in 1789 and the days of March and November of 1917 during the two Russian revolutions and when the Iranian people took to the street in autumn 1978 and winter 1979. This alone deserves a moment of reflection, perhaps a stance of modesty on behalf of everyone. Since what one third of the Lebanese people did on that day was a confirmation of the independence status that the country had been living, which is far greater than any single one of those who contributed in making it or tried leading it. It was even bigger that the sum of the efforts of all of them put together, no matter what their role was in the past or the present.

As for the event of the speedy exit of the Syrian forces, not enough has been said about this either. Was it because this event was too good to be

true? Or because the remains of the security system, which the Syrian intelligence left behind, have obscured the vision? Anyway, the joy has been missed while citizens, and those who are trying to lead them, almost failed to notice that a new page has been opened in Lebanese history and that this page requires a new kind of reading, or let's say a quality of reading different from that inspired by the calculation of sizes within the circles of the opposition.

There is no need now to refute some selfish behavior of X or Y in the opposition or to cite the mistakes that Y or Z had committed. The current independence status needs political expression with a parliamentary extension. Yet, we cannot but pause and look at the signals of dissatisfaction that society is sending to the opposition at large. And perhaps the first of these signals is related to the absence of an assessment of true sizes and particularly the estimation of the biggest size in the opposition formula, the size of the people in the street whether in its small organized part in political parties, organizations and movements or in its greater unorganized part. For it is not normal that the opposition waits more than two weeks to hold its first public meeting to evaluate what happened on March 14th and salute those who made it possible.

It is also not normal to let this day's popular movement disperse even if it's hard to keep it at its current climax. It becomes as if it [the opposition] is telling citizens: Well done. Go home now. We will call if we need you!

Another signal of popular dissatisfaction is related to the absence of a clear mechanism for decision making and setting the sails as has been evident in the individual behavior seen in more than one public event and on sensitive issues related to the fate of the president of the republic whose term has been extended or to that of "the arms of the resistance"

which means Hizbullah maintaining its military branch and the state inside the state that Hizbullah is currently guarding. Add to this the vague stance until yesterday on the cabinet crisis. The climax of this vagueness was attained when one of the opposition poles suggested, through a satellite television, a candidate for the premiership; the least that could be said about this nominee is that he occupies a dark spot in the Lebanese collective memory. But the biggest source of dissatisfaction might be the citizens feeling that the moment of victory coincided with a moment of reaping the fruits rather than starting anew.

While there are a number of people, who seem to possess a vision for the future and good discipline, the image of the opposition seems threatened as there are many opposition figures who only care about being in the right place at the right time whether there presence is related to parliamentary or presidential elections. It is true that there is a fine line between the attempt to broaden the opposition bloc by making the loyalist blocs fall apart, and the need for a new discipline in public life.

Yet, it is not impossible to reach a middle ground by giving former loyalists a chance to catch up on their past mistakes, without allowing them to insult citizens' memory by pretending to play leading roles in the opposition, especially when it comes to the formation of tickets for the upcoming parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, it is unacceptable for the opposition to give itself the image of the club of candidates to parliamentary elections. Even if Lebanon's parliament needs new blood, this does not mean that under the banner of renewing political life, the opposition makes citizens feel that all opposition figures are position seekers.

And what is said about the parliamentary elections market also applies to presidential elections. Even with the adjournment of this issue, it remains

shameful to see that after this uprising, some of those who are running for the presidency are the same ones known for their endless defense of "the unity of [peace] track and [Lebanon's and Syria's] destiny" and for their indifference to the suppression of the national will in governing Lebanon's foreign and domestic affairs. Doesn't it feel suspicious that every Maronite politician feels, time and again, that he is a nominee to these elections only by virtue of being born into this sect? Isn't the marketing for presidential candidates "who have not been in the opposition for more than ten years" or whose nomination is merely a challenge an obstruction to the building of a state that respects its citizens?

Are these early questions? No, fellow comrades in the opposition, whether you are new or veterans, take to the streets and you will hear it. You will hear with it a call for you to take the initiative for an uprising of a different kind, an uprising against the self that would - in the aftermath of the end of the Baath regime's mandate - pave the way to the building of a modern state, a state of citizens and not a state of subjects.

Appendix IV

Reclaiming Changes in the Personal Status Law: Example of Druze Women Activism (originally written in arabic. translated by the author)

Beirut, September 21, 2007
Factual certificate 16/AD
Established in May 8, 1996
Ras Beirut- Hosrom Bldg.
Facing Hbeish Police Station
Tel: 01/ 351514- 70931448

Judge Sheikh Moursil Nasr, Sheikh Sami Abou El Mouna,
Ms. Nahla El Hosainiya,
Presidents of the Committees at the Druze Denominational Council,
Presidents of organizations,
Sirs and Madams,
Dear Audience,

I welcome you and thank you for your presence and kind acceptance of our invitation. The woman has assumed the highest positions and came to lead mighty nations. However, and while we are at the dawn of the third millennium, the woman in the Middle East including the Druze woman is still begging for her stolen right, and her right to have the custody of her children even though Allah has honored her, made her the mother of the prophets and equal to the man in rights and obligations, marriage and divorce. I don't know why she's viewed as inferior, why her

rights and role are being ignored both on the national and legal levels and why she is taken for granted. Women represent 53% of the Lebanese people and contribute in getting their representatives to the Parliament. Despite that, the woman has been accused of weakness and failure after being enchained by the unjust laws such as the Personal Status Law and treated unfairly in the name of religion whereas religion is free of all injustice. Injustice lies in the way these laws are implemented and used for the benefit of the male society in order to subdue the woman and humiliate her.

The abstention of the woman from breaking her silence and claiming her rights has made her hostage of her executioners. With due respect and appreciation to the righteous that were just to the woman and honored her, there is a category of people who stand in the sunshine, their backs to the sun for them to look only at their shadows. Their shadows are the sharias they enjoyed setting for themselves and that are as unjust and selfish as they are. I ask those unjust men why they want to enslave women whereas women were born like them, free. Don't you know that the slave raises slaves, the free woman raises free children, and children take on the mentality of their mothers, not to mention the tendency of those fathers to dominate and destroy their children's personalities?. The institution of marriage must be based on justice and equality and not on giving precedence to one party over the other. Free women refuse to live in slaves' prisons; they live in the houses of the free.

Virtuous mothers, the reason behind the marginalization we are suffering from today goes back to the wrong way in which we were raised, to the differentiation in the upbringing and the discrimination between the boy and the girl, not to mention the custom to cut the girl's wings, subdue her and steal from her the freedom to decide, even though the woman having a strong personality is more proud of herself than the weak one that the man draws behind him with a thin thread. We should

change what's in the spirits before changing what's in the texts, enlighten the girl to her rights and obligations and prepare her for carrying the sacred mission of motherhood. It is wrong for the mother to think that the laws alone are sufficient to protect her rights. It is the right education in the house, based on rightness and faith that is the true protection for the parents and all members of the family.

Let's go back to our main issue. All Islamic denominations seek in their legislations decisions from their schools and the revealed koranic verses. Therefore, why isn't the essence of the Imam requirements (Shart Al Imam) applied in our legislations by virtue of a law without ignoring the rights of the woman as it is happening today? Isn't the current adopted law in contradiction with the teachings of the religion? Article 8 states the following: the Druze denominational courts may look in the cases and transactions related to the implementation of the Druze law and traditions. Since the conditions of Imam are at the core of the Druze law and traditions, its implementation is considered a custom for the courts and should be entered within the amendment to the Personal Status Law in order to become binding by virtue of a law. The Imam requirements were the first to treat the woman fairly five centuries ago.

What was in practice more than fifty years ago can no more remain in practice today. Life is a train, it does not go backwards and we should accompany it before it overcomes us. Can it be that the woman who stood by her husband, raised his children and kept his dignity, not to mention that some women had entered the work field, became productive like him and started to contribute to the income and expenses of the family house, to making a fortune with their husbands aside from raising their children and bearing the good things and the bad things in life… Can it be that this same woman, at bequeathing, is denied by her husband her right to the fortune along with her daughters, for he keeps it to himself and passes it on to his male children, no matter if they were rich or bad?

After being the lady of the house, she becomes the abandoned and lives in the house of the separated, while others enjoy her fortune? Is this the Justice that Allah had prescribed? Some husbands even deny their wives and daughters from a legacy and leave their wealth to other relatives if they didn't have any sons. Can it be that such unjust precepts are implemented in the name of the law in our denominational courts and judges are forced to execute them without any objection? Why don't we support each other to reform this law that was imposed on us since the year 1948 and to which no amendment had been brought until today? That is why I established the Charitable Organization for Social Enlightment in order to lift injustice, claim justice and enforce it.

The organization made lectures in all over Lebanon and urged the woman to claim her rights. In 1998, it held a conference in Anis Al Nousouli Hall to which it invited all the dignitaries and leaders of the denomination whether political or civil, denominational judges and presidents of organizations in the presence of his Excellency Mr. Marwan Hamade. After consultations, a follow-up committee for the study of the draft was formed, and after a year of endeavors, the amendment of the draft was completed, and I presented it to his Excellency Mr. Samir Al Jisr, Minister of Justice, who studied, approved and signed it along with the president of the Legislation and Consultations Commission, Magistrates Shukri Sader and Ziad Shaarani, and Judge Omar Al Natour. The draft is ready for implementation provided it is adopted by one of the Druze deputies or ministers. We are in desperate need for your support because the rights I am claiming are those of the sister, the mother, the daughter and the wife, whose misery or happiness will affect your lives, either positively or negatively. We put hopes on His Excellency the Minister Walid Jumblat to implement the draft when the security situation in Lebanon settles down. Some of the most important amendments to the law are the following:

1. Develop and update the Personal Status Law in accordance with the jurisprudences and annotations of Al Tawhid (monotheism) in view of doing justice to women with regards to marriage, divorce, bequeathing, custody and alimony.
2. Raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years old in order to enable them to continue their education and secure their future.
3. Raise the minimum age of custody to 13 years for boys and 15 years for girls, and grant judges the authority to raise or lower the custody age according to the interest of the child under guardianship. The competent mother shall have the right of preference for their custody, especially the custody of girls.
4. Bequeath the girl should the father die without leaving a will or having sons since the current law is based on the Hanafi school which gives the paternal uncle the right to appropriate half the estate of his deceased brother.
5. Give the virtuous mother legal custody of the children after the death of the husband. The judge may determine the identity of the second custodian from her husband's family. I call upon all young girls and boys to adopt upon marriage a modern law based on the jurisprudences of Al Tawhid by adding a condition approved by the fiancés and registered by the judge on the marriage certificate stipulating that any wealth occurring after marriage shall be equally divided during the marital life or upon separation, provided that the amount of the dowry remains low…

We cannot but praise the great achievements of the great leader Walid Bey Jumblat, to whom all respect and admiration are due for his endeavors to elect a Druze Denominational Council, and for rearranging the Druze affairs and reorganizing the Awqaf funds in favor of the needy

members of the Druze community. Our hopes are also pinned on the Sheikh Akl of the Muwahhidun (Druze) Naim Hassan, and on all presidents and committees of the Druze Denominational Council to fulfill the aspirations of the Druze community, rearrange its affairs and solve its problems. Therefore, we solicit the president and members of the denominational committee, and tell them that "the majority of the Muwahhidun wants changes".

Ms. May Abu Hamdan

Appendix V

"To be a Shiite now..."[474]

Mona Fayyad
An-Nahar: August 7, 2006

We are going through a catastrophic and existential period that will have long-lasting impacts on our country and region for the next century; and since we are facing such a dangerous juncture, I saw fit to pose some questions that one might pose to one's self, or in secret, and wouldn't dare publicize, in fear of being accused of being a foreign agent or a traitor, or even a blasphemer. Confronting difficult questions and putting them out in public could help prevent us from falling to the precipice from which there is no return, and could help leaders take the appropriate decisions in order to stop this hellish war, whatever the cost may be. What is the meaning of being Shiite for the majority of Shiites at this point and at this critical juncture?

To be a Shiite means that you entrust your fate to the wise and infallible leadership without daring to ask any question, even if just as a point of understanding.

To be a Shiite means watching the Al-Manar channel, or New TV or NBN, exclusively, and that you enjoy their inspirational songs and their exclusive news, and that you look with enmity on all other channels because they are either 'American' or 'Zionist,' as long as they refer to Israeli forces by their name, and do not call them the 'forces of the enemy,' and

474 The article has been originally written in Arabic with the title "An takun shi'a al-an".

do not have enough eulogies and only broadcast information.

To be a Shiite means that you do not question the meaning of victory. Is it the victory of armies while keeping soldiers - flush with weapons - alive, while destroying all of what is built, and the killing of the human beings that worked hard to build it up, and constitute the true protection for the fighter himself?

To be a Shiite means that you do not question the meaning of resistance and pride. Is it fleeing from bombing and being heaped together on the tile floors of schools…?

To be a Shiite is to contribute to the creation of a Lebanese 'Karbala 2,' as the Iraqi 'Karbala 1' did not perform its role as needed in building up the Arabs and carrying them on to victory over the enemy."

To be a Shiite is to be a hero that does not feel hurt nor complain, and does not have psychological crises, and accepts sacrificing himself and his country and everything that was accomplished so that he can teach Israel a lesson, and expose its craziness and ensure its defeat, as was indicated to us by the Syrian Minister on the BBC, that Israel is the loser… You see it is now hated more than ever before, and it is indicted by most of the nations of the world... now that they see for sure - and the lesson is still proceeding - the extent of its savagery and folly.

When you are Shiite, you have to accept this logic, and even praise it, admiring its eloquence, its wisdom, and its global role in spreading the legal education and the enactment of international treaties and its role on a popular level, in resistance and liberation. Didn't we see, through this war on us, that 'Syria is the cornerstone of this region?' These are the very

words of the [Syrian] minister himself.

Of course all this destruction was necessary in order to ensure with concrete evidence the validity of this reasoning; because of the level of our objective thinking, we only work with evidence and empirical experimentation.

To be a Shiite is to accept that your country be destroyed before your very eyes… and that it comes tumbling down on your head, and that your family be displaced and dispersed and becomes a 'refugee' at the four corners of the nation and the world, and that you accept standing up to the enemy with no complaints as long as there is a fighter out there with a rocket that he can launch at northern Israel - and maybe even at its south - without asking about the 'why' or about the timing or about the usefulness of the end result.

To be a Shiite is to accept that you sacrifice all, as long as you have someone who will compensate you with money, and that someone will look over you as you rebuild what he destroyed. What is your problem with that?

You see, we are a people of heroes that knows nothing but sacrifice, and we can absorb mental shocks and the death of loved ones and the humiliation of displacement and the destruction of the infrastructure of the state - since it is a weak, corrupt and follower state. Is it not enough to have on our side a strong country [i.e. Syria] whose foundations we work to support in confronting the unjust American might and the Israeli war machine from hell? - that machine whose weakness we have to prove, as well as its inability to inflict any harm on the fighters of Hizbullah, or on its ability to limit their military capabilities, and to prove that at any price?

To be a Shiite is to keep silent and not to ask what is the purpose of liberating a country. Is it to destroy it all over again and to make it possible for it to be occupied once more? And not to ask about the role of the leadership: Is it to preserve its military power and keep its men flush with arms without any care or concern for the normal human being? Being a Shiite means that you can only thank Hizbullah for its heroism and sacrifice. It is not your role to contribute to 'weakening' it or to 'breaking its word' or to making it know when to back down or compromise to preserve its victory on the one hand and to preserve the Lebanese nation and its people, as well as its development, on the other hand!! That means never to question whether pride takes precedence over the lives of others and whether stones take precedence over arms.

To be a Shiite means to confer on the leader of the resistance his role as a loyal hero to the cause of the Arab nation in its entirety, not only whether you like it or not, but whether that nation likes it or not. You only have to hear the popular praise of the masses, that was preceded by the praise the masses heaped on their loyal hero 'Abd Al-Nasser, and is still shedding tears for its other hero, Saddam Hussein. And the masses are still able to heap praise on any hero that tickles its dreams and its feelings so that it can sleep tight at night… or to recover its lost dignity under the boots of rulers like Saddam, as long as we, and only we, pay the price until your real awakening.

But the question is, to what degree can we rely on these incapable masses, who are enslaved by their rulers, to liberate themselves without even thinking about reconsidering this Jihadist and revolutionary plan!! Are they empowered? Are they wise enough? Have they prepared the ground for that? Do they have tools for fighting and remaining steadfast other than the arms of zeal and emotion and oratory?

If you are a Shiite you are not to ask this leadership how the groundwork was prepared to absorb this indiscriminate war and its 'potential' consequences. Where are the hospitals, the ambulances, not to speak of the shelters? These are the responsibilities of the state - which was never consulted in declaring war - so that it can be blamed for its weakness and lack of wit. You see, the state is only needed when it is called upon to heal wounds, but the wise and existential decisions are not within its realm.

To be a Shiite means to incapacitate your mind and to leave it to [Iranian Supreme Leader] Khamenei to guide you and to decide for you what he wants concerning arms for Hizbullah, and he imposes on you a notion of victory that is no different than suicide.

To be a Shiite means to defend the meddling of the Iranian [Foreign] Minister Mottaki in Lebanese state affairs without even trying to care for appearances. Maybe he came to 'point out' to the ministers of Hizbullah that they [the Hizbullah ministers] 'did not agree' to the seven-point plan, especially the point about the multinational force, so that the door of the resistance would not be shut, and so that we can remain a country exploited and abused, after it was proven that the Shab'a Farms are Syrian and would be dealt with in accordance with Resolution 242… And in that he is warning them about putting their Lebanese identity before their following Iran.

They have to, against their own will, put the Iranian nuclear program and the interest of the state of Iran ahead of the interest of their state, and ahead of the preservation of the lives of the Lebanese or their possessions, whether these Lebanese are Shiite or otherwise, but especially if they are Shiites. Isn't it a priority to make Iran a regional Shiite superpower? What is the problem with sacrificing a country called Lebanon? Or the Shiites

of this 'Lebanon'?

And in this tense mood, if you are a Shiite you have to listen to your Shiite speaker, who is disturbed and angry, and who wants to turn the world on top of the 14th of March, and who wants to forbid the deployment of multinational forces. And you hear him distribute labels of foreign servitude, treason, Americanism and Zionism left and right, without raising your lip. You have to absorb his anger and agree with all his opinions, of which we have mentioned but a small sample. This is what takes you as far as possible from thinking: who the heck you are? Are you a Lebanese citizen? Does your being a Shiite mean that you have to give priority to Iran over Lebanon? Do you have the freedom to have your own opinions? Freedom of expression? Is it possible to think calmly and to ask where are we going with this nation, the institutions of this state, with pluralism, with the coexistence that we have to defend now?

If you are a Shiite and you dare write such writings and think such thinking, then you must be a foreign agent and a traitor, in favor of partition and naturalization of Palestinians [in Arab states]. You must be with the Zionist and Israeli projects, and you defend the state, with its corruption and favoritism, and you support the biased American policies, and you accept its short-sightedness, and its support for the terrorism of the Zionist state, and its failure to give the Palestinians their state like all other creatures of God, under the pretext of not supporting the terrorism of Hamas. And that means you support Israel itself and its satanic war machine and its extreme savagery, and you justify its killing, its occupation, and its folly, and you are lucky if you are not accused of being the one destroying houses on people's heads and the dismemberment of children's corpses and scattering them on the heaps of debris - [all this] by raising your voice.

Did I forget any of the symptoms? If I did, please excuse me, because I cannot miss any of the news shows any more. I have to go see who is being displaced and whose house is being destroyed at the moment - that is, if he manages to survive.

Appendix VI

Sheikh Afif Nabulsi's Fatwa: the Lawsuit

Matar Mouawad Majdalani Al-Khazin

Law firm

Minaa Al Hosn, Omar El DAOU ST., Starco Complex, Block B, second floor, Beirut - Lebanon

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PO.BOX: 11/1499 Riyadh al Sohl, Beirut 1107 2080, Lebanon

Submitted to the first investigating judge in Beirut

(Judge Abdul Rahim Hammoud)

Direct complaint and institution of a civil action

Presented by

Plaintiffs: * Talal Al-Husseini.
* Youssef Al-Zein.
* Fares Sassin.
* Fahmiye Sharafeddine.
* Nada Sahnawi.
* Mona Fayyad.
* Ghassan Moukheiber.
* Mohammed Farid Mattar

Versus

Defendant: Sheikh / Afif Al-Naboulsi. Sidon – East highway - Zahraa compound
Adjacent to Sidon's official technical school.

Merits: false impersonation – perpetration of acts such as threatening and terrorizing people aimed at obstructing the exercise of civil rights – stirring up sectarian tensions and depicting the political disputes as occurring among communities and religions.

In the facts:

1: On the morning of Wednesday December 21, 2005, the Lebanese newspapers published a statement that had been broadcasted by the audio-visual media, attributed to the defendant / Sheikh Afif Al-Naboulsi, introduced as the president of the Association of Jabal Amel Ulama. It was said in that statement:

"There are external attempts to which some local forces are responding by excluding Amal and Hizbollah, and bringing new representatives for the Shiites. Therefore, we forbid as per our legitimate capacity, any Shiite political party from entering as a substitute and ancillary to the representatives of Amal and Hezbollah. Any such entry from any Shiite political party is illegitimate because it does not represent the people will, and does not have the required legitimate authorization. We address a precautionary fatwa to all Shiite politicians who try to take advantage and go into the present governmental crisis, in order not to entangle themselves with a commitment and agreement with others while they do not represent the people and do not have a legitimate justification

for such an action".

(Kindly review Wednesday December 21, 2005 newspapers).

2: The text of this statement shows that its author / the defendant alleges the following:

2-1: a legitimate position to issue fatwas,

2-2: that allows him to forbid the Shiite Lebanese citizens from exercising their constitutional rights,

2-3: at the risk of violating the Sharia, threatening them with moral or physical abuse that such alleged violation may entail,

2-4: In addition to the moral abuse from one side and to the delusion and enticement of the public from another side and that are caused by the mere issuance of the fatwa,

2-5: seeking to stir up sectarian fanaticism which would be requited, should it take place or even by the mere call for it, by similar calls and fanaticism. The fanaticism here lies in inviting the public to: a) consider the political party and the denomination as being the same, b) and therefore to consider those from outside the denomination who antagonize this party as antagonizing this same denomination, c) and those who transgress this party and who are pertaining to this same denomination as disloyal to it, d), and consider this act, that is joining the government, as an act of antagonism and treason, judged as such not based on a person's opinion but on religion and denomination. This contributes a lot, considering the people's anxiety and apprehension, to

stirring up emotions (i.e. stirring up sectarian fanaticism). It contributes as well, considering the current security situation, to allowing abuses. Had it not been for that content, the audio-visual and written media wouldn't have circulated that description from a person who does not have the capacity to issue religious or legal fatwas.

2-6: And that in a matter that is relevant to a political judgment and a free action that the Sharia has no concern in settling or assessing in the scope of the Lebanese laws which determine the citizens' rights and obligations or regulate their religious affairs and institutions.

2-7: We are not counting hereby, in assessing the damage that is caused, the invalidity and unsoundness of the defendant's opinion or the lack of his capacity or the object of his judgment. For the defendant has anyway a religious capacity and he is the authority in assessing the damage; he is in the level of facts and expectation and not in the level of evidences and validation. There is no assumption that the public is able of judging in this respect. The religious reality based on the mixture exploited by the defendant is an obvious prevalent undeniable reality. What proves this clearness and prevalence is that the defendant did not need to reveal what the statement included as meanings of hostility, mistrust and terrorism. These meanings are clear to the mind. And seditions are false. The illegality and the illegitimacy of the fatwa do not protect its holder from the liability for the crime. Thus, there is a need to the judgment of the courts for right's clarification, damage's and evil's avoidance.

2-8: What emphasizes this need is what is known in the history of Muslims of the danger of the capacity impersonated by the defendant. For, the fatwa emanates from the religious plans, such as prayer, judiciary,

Jihad, and probate. Abdel-Rahman Ben Khaldoun in Chapter thirty one of the introduction, says the following: "the fatwa is for the caliph skimming scholars and teachers, giving back the fatwa to whom eligible and therefore helping him, and preventing whom is not eligible, because it is for the benefit of Muslims in their religion and they shall observe it lest it is exposed to whom not eligible who might mislead people (…) save that each mufti and teacher shall have something to prevent him within himself from dealing with what he is not eligible and might mislead the guided. He, who shall dare to face the fatwa, shall also dare to face the germs of hell. The bravest shall consider what the benefit requires as allowance and refusal."

2-9: As for those to whom the Fatwa is addressed among the public, they are subject to its risks, mainly in the Jaafari doctrine as mentioned in the summary introduced by Mohammed Jawad Moughnieh in Part VI of the "doctrine of Jaafar El-Sadeq": "This is why the impersonator shall not be asked about the book of God nor for the Sunna of his Prophet if he wanted to know about one of the provisions, but asked about the fatwa of the imam that he is impersonating and following and considering him as a reference in the religious issues…" The defendant is not only impersonating the fatwa but also the capacity of the judge in calling for prudence and the capacity of the scholar in referring to the inference in the judgment instead of revealing the judgment only. The aforementioned was to be right in the event only the defendant had the right to express his opinion, thus he would have had the right to deal with his subject the way he wants and yield the benefit he wants. But the fact is that the defendant is transgressing the power of the legal provisions in all what they have as awe and intimidation aiming at hindering Lebanese citizens from exercising their rights.

2-10: Meanwhile, whereas the Higher Shiite Council, which is an institution of the institutions of the Lebanese positive law, whereas it has to control such behaviors done by those who have a religious capacity attributed to the Shiites, whereas the Council did not act within a reasonable period in regard to the said behavior, therefore the Lebanese Courts shall settle the whole issue. This shall be done in the light of the principle of harmony between the religion and the state approved by the National Accord, which resulted in the confirmation of the Constitution that the heads of the acknowledged religions have the right to refer to the Constitutional Council in what affects the rights of the religions as religious groups, first in order to guarantee those rights and second to confirm the sovereignty and authority of the positive law in organizing the coexistence among the Lebanese regardless of their religious rules, separately and jointly, both within and outside groups and between them.

In the Law:

Article IX of the Act of "the organization of the affairs of the Shiite Community in Lebanon" stipulates the following:

"The legal commission is composed of twelve Lebanese clerics elected by a group of Lebanese clerics for six years".

The author/defendant is not a member in the said commission.

In all cases, Article Thirty of the same Act stipulates in regard to the powers of the said commission the following:

"The legal commission is the authority that shall give its opinion and decide on any matter related to religion, law and civil status and it is not

allowed to directly carry out anything in contrary to the decisions of the legal commission".

Article Seventy-Two of the bylaws of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council stipulated in the chapter on the offices of muftis the following:

"The posts of the Jaafari muftis as well as all the posts of the departments of the Jaafari offices are religious posts related to the religion and law stipulated in article thirty of the Act".

The author/defendant is not a mufti and is not part in their offices, which makes his action a committed crime against the public authority, penalized by article 392 of the Penal Code as follows:

"He who impersonates a public post, whether civil or military, or carries out the powers given thereby, shall be penalized by two months to two years of imprisonment. In the event the committer was wearing while working a uniform or insignia specific to the staff, he shall be penalized by less than four months of imprisonment. In the event the act is accompanied with another crime, the penalty shall be increased in accordance with the provisions of Article 257".

The subject that the defendant is alleging to give his opinion thereupon is not a matter of religion, law or civil status, but of the civil rights dictated by the Lebanese Constitution. They are the rights whose exercise is protected by law as stipulated in Article 329 of the Penal Code:

"Any act that might impede the Lebanese citizen of exercising their civil rights or obligations shall be penalized by one month to one year of imprisonment if he committed it under threat and distress and other means

of physical or moral coercion."
"If the crime was committed by an armed group composed of three or more persons, they shall be penalized by six months to three years of imprisonment; in the event the crime was not committed by an armed group, the imprisonment shall be from two months to two years".

The subsequent article of the same Code, article 330 stipulates the following:

"In the event one of the actions mentioned in the previous article was carried out in the application of an orchestrated plan executed on the territories or regions of the state, the perpetrators shall be penalized by temporary detention or deportation".

The defendant/author, who has no capacity in this concern, is not only seeking to threat and moral intimidation that may end up in physical intimidation, but to stimulate sectarianism that must be confronted by similar calls and sectarianism from other communities. This is one of the crimes that undermine national unity or disrupt the harmony between the elements of the nation stipulated in the Penal Code, as stated in Article 317:

"Any act, writing or speech aiming at or resulting in stimulating racial or confessional bigotry or inciting conflicts between religions and various elements of the nation shall be penalized by one to three years of imprisonment and with a fine of fifty to four hundred Lebanese Lira and shall be as well forbidden from exercising the rights mentioned in both paragraphs two and four of article 65 and the court shall rule to publish the judgment".

In witness thereof,
As you deem appropriate,
And for what we would say if need be,

The plaintiffs: Talal Al-Husseini, Youssef Al-Zein, Fares Sassin, Fahmiye Sharafeddine, Nada Sahnawi, Mona Fayyad, Ghassan Moukheiber and Mohammed Farid Mattar have filed a direct complaint with institution of a civil action against the defendant/Sheikh Afif Al-Naboulsi known as the President of "the Association of Jabal Amel Ulama" as well as all the persons that are proved to be partners, committers, interveners or instigators in the following crimes:

1- Impersonating the capacity of delivering the fatwa and imposing an illegal tutelage upon Lebanese citizens under the pretext of refusing a foreign tutelage already refused.
2- Threatening and intimidating Lebanese citizens in view of hindering them from exercising their civil rights of participation that they solely have the right to decide them positively or negatively.
3- Stimulating sectarianism through depicting the political disputes between political movements that are sometimes rivals, others allied or even connivers as occurring among communities and religions.

Seeking to investigate with him about the aforementioned crimes, suspecting him, arresting him by the competent courts, taking legal action against him, penalizing him severely and deciding to publish the judgment in the newspapers and the media at the expenses of the defendant, though maintaining all the rights of the plaintiffs of all kinds and parties.

With due reserves and respect

Talal Al-Husseini
Youssef Al-Zein
Fares Sassin
Fahmiye Sharafeddine
Nada Sahnawi
Mona Fayyad
Ghassan Moukheiber
Mohammed Farid Mattar

Appendix VII

Sheikh Afif Nabulsi's Fatwa: Communiqué issued on behalf of the Plaintiffs against Sheikh Afif Al-Nabulsi in front of First Investigation Judge in Beirut

(originally written in arabic. Translated by the author)

Visible, heard, and printed media had relayed statements and avowals related to a number of parties of which details and implications we won't discuss in the meantime. However we find ourselves, obliged to clarify the following:

1. The head of the Shiite Supreme Council, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, and Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah can declare as much unison as they please with the defendant Sheikh Afif Al-Nabulsi, for this is their right, and refers to their own judgment, specifically in terms of their ability to provide proper clarifications on the following: Is the defendant's action a produce of legitimate fatwa (religious decree) or is it a result of favorable or unfavorable political affiliation? A truth that their statements do not reveal.
2. However, and in all cases, no one has the right, regardless of capacity, to subjectively decide to deprive the Lebanese citizens of their constitutional and legal rights and guarantees. First of which is the right to resort to the judiciary in cases of violation of rights, regardless of the violator's capacity.
3. Of course, this unison and its articulations and whatever it may imply of attempts to thwart or threaten or assault the plaintiff or the investigating party in this case is unacceptable and won't subdue us. Therefore, we shall proceed with this complaint with all suitable legal procedures.

4. We do not claim, as habit dictates, that expressing an opinion on a case under judicial revision is unacceptable. But we say it is beneficiary that the judiciary be well informed of the social context of this case under revision. The context of the reactions and positions that have been issued in the media reinforces the background we referred to in the complaint we filed; which is the concept of unlawful influence over a matter of political choice and freedom of action that religious ruling has no role in deciding or rectifying in the context of Lebanese laws that articulate civil rights and obligations or regulate religious affairs and institutions, and it generally reinforces the underestimation of legal regulations as if we are in a temporary camp or border strip.
5. On the other hand, it is imperative to note the fact that along with the Lebanese in general, we are still capable of distinguishing between what is free expression of opinion or unison and what is a clear act of unlawful practice of pressure, intimidation, and defamation. Accordingly, we recall the outcome of resorting to the judiciary hereunder, and of the possible legal penal measures.

Appendix VIII

"Civil Center for National Initiative" – Statement of Purpose
(July 2007)

Comment se peut-il que les Libanais parviennent à se gouverner par eux-mêmes? Pour répondre à cette question, au niveau de la pensée et à celui de l'action, et afin de satisfaire la forte aspiration des Libanais à être, en tant que Libanais, un peuple formé de citoyens égaux et libres, porteurs d'une volonté de vie dans la cadre d'une charte issue de cette volonté – et l'édictant dans un esprit de quête de ce qui est souhaitable ou prévisible, ou bien dans l'esprit de tirer le meilleur de la réalité passée ou présente -, les signataires proclament la création du «Centre civil pour l'initiative nationale » sur les bases suivantes:

1. Les Libanais sont égaux et libres. Ils disposent d'eux-mêmes en tant qu'individus et jouissent de la souveraineté nationale en tant que collectivité. La coexistence est la règle entre eux. Quant à ce qui doit être reconnu aux groupes religieux et ce qui doit revenir aux relations avec les Etats frères et amis, cela s'arrête là où commence cette liberté individuelle et cette souveraineté nationale.
2. Le Liban est un Etat à caractère civil. Il n'impose pas de religion par la contrainte et n'en rejette aucune par le déni. Dans le cadre de cet Etat, les Libanais de toutes croyances et de toutes catégories sociales, culturelles et religieuses, aspirent à une vie libre, digne et tranquille, un Etat dans lequel le droit des groupes à l'existence est consacré, l'indépendance de l'entité chérie, la justice entre les hommes répandus et le règne da la loi en marche, avec la garantie d'un pouvoir judiciaire indépendant.

3. La garantie de la coexistence passe par celle de l'acceptation et du respect des lois. Elle passe aussi par le souci permanent de faire en sorte que ces lois soient propices au dialogue et à la participation, de façon à ce qu'elles soient l'incarnation de la liberté individuelle et de la souveraineté tant dans les textes que dans leurs applications, leur interprétation, leur amendement et leur abrogation.
4. Telle est la signification que nous affirmons pour l'Etat de droit, l'Etat de droit des Libanais, légiférant au service de leurs projets de vie en individus et en groupes et pour la protection de ces projets, et s'appuyant sur la force d'un pouvoir libanais spécifique jouissant des mêmes capacités qui sont celles des Libanais et avec leur agrément.
5. La défense du Liban est la responsabilité des Libanais. Sa réalisation est liée à la solidarité entre eux et à leur bon jugement à l'égard de leur situation et de leur environnement, ainsi qu'à la nature des rapports qu'ils établissent avec autrui, des rapports fondés sur l'intérêt national et les obligations arabes et internationales.
6. Les Libanais optent pour l'ouverture sur le monde. C'est un choix fondé sur la réalité qu'ils vivent et qu'ils et qu'ils ambitionnent, en tant que Libanais arabe – à l'avant-garde des Arabes – de façonner et de planifier, autant que d'en jouir des fruits dans tous les domaines.
7. Les Libanais choissent de poursuivre l'édification de leur Etat et de persévérer dans l'action d'élever le niveau de leur vie commune et celui de leur éthique, en cherchant à corriger leurs erreurs et en défendant leur existence. Il s'agit pour eux du choix d'un projet digne de leur respect et de celui du monde.

Ces fondements ne sont pas livres ex cathedra. Ils découlent des nécessaires leçons à tirer de l'expérience historique des Libanais. Ils reflètent clairement les faits de leur existence et la vérité de leurs espoirs et leurs aspirations, en tant que peuple parmi les autres:

1. Il ne fait pas de doute que les Libanais ne veulent pas revenir à des guerres, que ce soit pour eux-mêmes ou pour d'autres. Il ne fait pas de doute non plus que l'unique chemin qui s'ouvre devant eux est l'établissement de leur Etat, c'est-à-dire qu'ils soient en mesure de se gouverner par eux-mêmes au sein d'un Etat, lequel devrait être indépendant ou ne pas être.
2. Si le Libanais veulent se gouverner par eux-mêmes, cela doit nécessairement passer par l'autorité de la loi. L'alternative est l'impossible pouvoir des armes ou le chaos suivi de tutelles confessionnelles et étrangères.
3. Si le Libanais veulent instaurer l'autorité de la loi, il leur faut impérativement adopter la loi temporelle, terrestre. L'alternative étant les lois religieuses et sectaires qu'il est impossible de mettre en œuvre de concert entre elles ou d'appliquer l'une d'elles sur tout le monde.
4. Si les Libanais veulent instaurer un Etat de droit sur la base de la loi temporelle et terrestre, il leur faut nécessairement opter pour un Etat à caractère civil, faute de quoi on serait en présence d'un Etat confessionnel portant atteinte à l'existence et aux droits des individus et du peuple et ne remplissant pas, juridiquement et de facto le rôle d'un Etat, ou bien d'un Etat laïc qui ne reconnaît pas l'existence des groupes et dont la création est liée soit à un vœu utopique, soit à une oppression volontaire et artificielle.
5. Si les Libanais veulent que leur Etat soit à caractère civil, le système de cet Etat doit impérativement être parlementaire, les alternatives étant le régime présidentiel, le directorat ou encore le régime d'assemblée. Or ces régimes alternatifs exigent un niveau trop élevé de confiance, de grande capacité de retenue et des garanties suffisantes, faute de quoi ils se caractériseraient par l'autoritarisme ou la paralysie.
6. Si les Libanais veulent pour l'Etat un système parlementaire, il faud-

> rait impérativement que l'autorité des gouvernements y repose sur la confiance attribuée par un Parlement bicaméral, formé d'un Chambre des députés et d'un Sénat, et sur une séparation des postes législatifs et exécutifs. L'alternative est la bipolarité, la tri-polarité ou la quadri-polarité, dans lesquelles il n'existe pas de responsabilité claire, pas de séparation entre les pouvoirs, donc pas de possibilité de sanction au Parlement ou par le peuple lors des élections.

Libanais,
La volonté de paix est réalisable par le dépassement des illusions nées des ambitions impossibles et par l'instauration de l'Etat unique qui porte en lui la vraie garantie contre les périls, que ces périls soient réels ou illusoires. Dans ce but, il nous faut prendre conscience réellement que ce nous vivons aujourd'hui n'est pas simplement une crise de gouvernement ou de pouvoir, ni une crise due à la présence d'un arsenal libanais ou non-libanais, ni même une crise provoquée par des ingérences étrangères. C'est une crise de système et, de façon première, une crise d'entité. Le système confessionnel est historiquement mort. Son agonie peut se prolonger pu pas dans le temps, il reste que son opportunité historique a pris fin. Le coût du système confessionnel, d'abord sur le plan de sécurité, les guerres qu'il port en son sein, l'état d'inquiétude permanente qu'il nourrit: sur le plan économique, du point de vue de la corruption qu'il protége et de la faillite qu'il finit par provoquer ; sur le plan politique, par son déficit de légitimité nationale et par l'altération de la compétition politique qu'il transforme en conflit entre les religions et les communautés; sur le plan humaine, par la contrainte qu'il exerce sur les gens dans leurs croyances et leur liberté d'appartenance religieuse et confessionnelle et donc de leur liberté personnelle et privée; et enfin sur le plan juridique, par l'atteinte qu'il porte au principe de l'égalité entre les citoyens, ce coût élevé par rapport aux bénéfices qui en sont attendus rend impérative la fin de son op-

portunité historique du point de vue du projet libanais comme projet de sécurité d'une part, d'évolution et d'émancipation de l'autre. Pour cela, nous démontrons les points suivants:

1. La crise actuelle n'est pas seulement une crise de pouvoir ou de gouvernement, mais aussi une crise de système.
2. La crise actuelle n'est pas seulement une crise de système, mais aussi une crise d'entité.
3. Au niveau de la crise de système, les Libanais ne disposent pas d'un instrument juridique efficace leur permettant de se gouverner par eux-mêmes. Ils ne disposent pas non plus en ce moment de l'entente intérieure nécessaire pour que cet instrument soit disponible.
4. Au niveau de la crise de l'entité, les Libanais ne peuvent pas compter sur un consensus international suffisant, ni sur une volonté internationale contraignante pour les aider à établir leur Etat ou à le protéger.
5. L'objectif est d'élaborer un projet d'Etat libanais et de le présenter à la société libanaise et à la communauté internationale.
6. Ce qui est donc souhaitable, c'est de créer une force intellectuelle et dotée de moyens concrets pour élaborer ce projet et le présenter, puis d'entreprendre de le réaliser. Cette force, de par ses objectifs, ne peut être qu'un mouvement libanais, donc une force de rassemblement. En tant que telle, elle ne peut être qu'indépendante et non prisonnière de tel individu, telle communauté ou de tel Etat frère ou ami.

C'est pour ces raisons qu'à été crée le «Centre civil pour l'initiative nationale» en tant que centre indépendant et non en tant que parti, mouvement politique ou partie prenante dans la compétition politique. Il s'agit d'une initiative claire posée au niveau national à partir d'une base civile, non confessionnelle. Voilà pourquoi ces objectifs se présentent de

la manière suivante:

1. Mise au point du projet du «Liban, Etat à caractère civil» et expérimentation de ses données fondamentales par le recours à l'étude et au dialogue qui s'imposent. Le projet devra être détaillé avec précision de façon à ce qu'il soit apte à la mise en oeuvre, et cela sur la base de la reconnaissance de la diversité des intérêts et de la nécessité de la coordination et de la cohésion entre ces intérêts.

   Ces intérêts sont:
   a – Les intérêts du peuple, c'est-à-dire des Libanais, en tant que collectivité nationale unique, formée de citoyens égaux et libres.
   b – Les intérêts du peuple, c'est-à-dire des Libanais, en tant que collectivité nationale unique, formée de citoyens égaux et libres.
   c – Les intérêts des divers groupes libanais, religieux ou autres.
   d – Les intérêts des individus, dans la mesure où ils disposent d'eux-mêmes face à l'Etat et face aux groupes.

2. Présentation de ce projet:

   a – Par proclamation publique, par les contacts, les discussions générales, la tenue d'activité adéquates et la publication des résultats des discussions et des études.
   b – Par la création d'un réseau de branches à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur.

3. Lancement, accueil et adoption d'initiatives allant dans ce sens, à tous les niveaux, intellectuels, politiques et populaires.

4. œuvrer à créer la force politique nationale pour réaliser le projet du

«Liban, Etat à caractère civil» , tout en maintenant l'indépendance du «Centre»:

a – vis-à-vis des autorités de l'Etat;
b – vis-à-vis de l'ensemble des forces politiques et sociales, y compris la force politique qu'il travaille à former.

5. Démontrer la position nationale à l'égard des questions posées, régulièrement et chaque fois que le besoin d'une telle démonstration se fait ressentir, et cela de manière à assurer:

a – le caractère civil de l'approche;
b – la protection du «Centre» contre toute tendance à être une partie prenante dans la compétition politique pour le pouvoir.

6. Assurer le suivi de ce projet et de ce qui résulte de sa mise ne oeuvre.

Tels sont les principes du « Centre civil pour l'initiative nationale » et tels sont ses objectifs clairs. Voilà nos noms franchement livrés, nous qui prenons l'initiative de proclamer sa fondation et qui oeuvrons sur la base d'un statut fondamental et d'un statut interne garantissant le respect de ses principes et assurent l'efficacité dans la recherche de ses objectifs. En conséquence de quoi, les activités essentielles du Centre se feront par le biais de comités d'études, de travail et d'initiatives. Ces comités regrouperont des membres du Centre, mais aussi tous ceux qui partageraient leurs objectifs de l'extérieur, à tel niveau ou à tel autre. Il s'agit d'un Centre qui appartient à tous ceux qui oeuvrent au service de l'établissement d'un Etat Libanais indépendant, au pouvoir civil, et non d'un Centre pour un individu ou pour un autre, telle communauté ou telle fraction. Nous

voulons qu'il soit un Centre pour la patrie et pour tous ceux qui souhaitent être des citoyens pari d'autres égaux et libres. Vive le Liban.